DWB

The Journal of British Fantasy Television

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BBC VIDEO/BLAKE'S SEVEN SPECIAL

STOP PRESS: SEASON 27 OF 'DOCTOR WHO' CONFIRMED, SEE PAGE 4

SPECIAL TARDIS TELEPHONE OFFER (Back Page)

editorial

The Journal of British Fantasy Television

P.O. BOX 1015, BRIGHTON BN2 2YU

NEARLY half of you expressed more than a casual interest in it, so we think you'll find this month's special 'Blake's Seven' supplement an unexpected bonus in addition to the extra colour we've incorporated this issue!

With such a packed issue there isn't the room or time to waffle on for half a column this month, save to say that, yes, last issue's back page 'Who poster was from the 1977 adventure 'The Invisible Enemy' and not 'The Face of Evil', and please stop sending your correspondence to the old Harrow-Weald address which only results in it being delayed. All the best. GARY

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38% of people in the 1988 DWB Readers Poll expressed a special interest in **BLAKES 7**.

How is it best to recall this classic series to mind?

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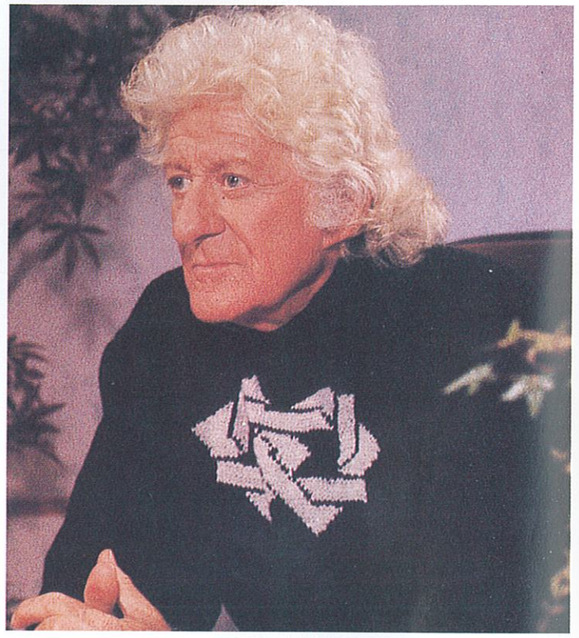
news

'SENTINEL' SET FOR PRODUCTION



JON PERTWEE AS JASON HAVLIN (C) GAIA PRODUCTIONS

SOUTHERN-BASED television company TVS have expressed an interest in financing GAIA Penvellan Productions' 'Sentinel' project starring Jon Pertwee as Jason Havlin, and the series could be in production by October.

With a budget of around £½m per episode, the first series will comprise of 13 50-minute interlinked episodes - spaced out to one hour with inserted advertising - with the first two parts serving as a two-hour special to premiére the show. While that is in production for four months - hopefully starting in October - the company plan to raise the necessary funds for the other 11 episodes which will establish the plot of the Earth under threat. There is already talk of a second series which would comprise much more of self-contained episodes. Indeed 'Sentinel' creator believes that, like **Doctor Who**, it could run and run!

'Sentinel' - which is only a working title and will probably be changed - is aimed at the **Robin of Sherwood/Doctor Who** type of family audience and it is anticipated it will be scheduled either on Saturday afternoons at around 5.30pm or during the week between 7-8.30pm.

COMING SOON: We talk to Chris Leach in detail about this promising new project which we hope to cover in all stages of its production.

ITC POSTCARD RANGE LAUNCHED

ENGALE MARKETING, publishers of Time Screen and the Gerry Anderson-devoted 'S.I.G.', have produced a series of 16 postcards depicting scenes from several ITC action series to compliment their already extensive range of Gerry Anderson postacards.

The series covered include **The Champions, Randall and Hopkirk(Deceased), The Saint** and **The Prisoner.**

Each card costs around 30p and are available from most fantasy outlets, or send an SAE to Thunderbooks,332 Lytham Road, South Shore, Blackpool.

SHAKE-UP AT ITC

ITC, the film production company that produced such telefantasy classics as 'The Champions', 'The Prisoner', 'Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)' and 'Hammer House of Horror', not to mention Gerry Anderson series such as 'Thunderbirds', 'UFO' and 'Space 1999', has recently been bought out by its subsidiary, ITC New York, which means that ITC and all its products are now American property.

Set up by Lew Grade (Michael's uncle) in the 1950s to make film series for his ATV television company, ITC became Britain's biggest independent producer of television adventure series, reaching its peak during the mid-sixties when ATV could comfortably launch at least four new series a season. During the seventies the company's fortunes wained, their final productions being series like Shillingbury Tales and **Return of the Saint**; it is no wonder that The Muppet Show became their most lucrative product.

The company tried its hand at feature films, but got it badly burnt with the classic all-time box-office failure Raise The Titanic. The final blow to the company came in 1980 when ATV lost its franchise to Central Television. ITC soldiered on still marketing old ATV and ITC series and some new Central material, but its production days were over even with funding a few foreign based co-productions such as Ski Boy. The company was eventually bought from Lord Grade by Australian businessman Michael Bond to add to his Film Bond film stock storage company, although the basic management at ITC remained the same.

POTENTIAL

Early last year Bond started to make moves on the Stock Market to buy out Tiny Rowland's Lonhro corporation, one of Britain's largest multinational companies. For this project he needed to raise capital by selling off some of his assets including ITC. The management of ITC New York - knowing the potential value of the material belonging to ITC (which includes a lot of film and TV series not originally made by ITC) - approached the US banks for venture capital and bought the company from Bond.

The American directors who bought the company are naturally looking for a way to capitalise on their investment. Already there have been great changes; Cullum House, the traditional home of ITC in Denham, has been vacated for an office in Perivale and the number of staff working for ITC in this country has been whittled down to a mere handful. Merchandising of ITC material has virtually ground to a halt, suspending the production of some very interesting products that were in the pipeline, as all documentation and contracts have now to meet American approval. It is even rumoured that Gerry Anderson, who obtained the rights to merchandise his own series, is now having problems with the new management.

THE HERITAGE COLLECTION

On the positive side, the drive to make capital out of ITC-held productions has led to the re-launch of old material under the title of The Heritage Collection. The fantasy series currently being offered for sale include **The Prisoner, Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased), Thunderbirds, Space 1999, Hammer House of Horror** and **The Champions** in a total of twenty shows including Gerry Anderson's **The Protectors, Danger Man** and **The Persuaders.** It is hoped that television stations in this country will take advantage of the collection by buying at least some of these classic series.

It is also likely that ITC will begin producing similar series of their own again; already a new Sherlock Holmes film starring Michael Caine has just opened funded by ITC. P.PRITT

THE PRISONER IN FRENCH . . .

FRENCH FANTASY publishing house NéO is putting together a special illustrated book on the classic ITC series 'The Prisoner'.

The book, to be titled 'le Prisonnier - Chef-d'Oeuvre Télévisionnaire' (**The Prisoner** - Television Masterpiece) - will contain over 200 pages, many in full colour, with hundreds of photos.

Written by Alain Carrazé and Héléne Oswald, the book will look at **The Prisoner** as a work of art. It is due out in September and will cost 450Fr. £45), but a subscription is available for the book until June 6th which costs 360Fr.(£36). Each subscription copy will be individually numbered but nos. 1 and 6 have been reserved for Patrick McGoohan! Just like the series there will be seventeen number 2s, from no.2a to 2q, at the astounding subscription price of 2000Fr.(£200) each!

Further information about the book can be obtained from NéO/Huitième Art, 5 Rue Cochin, 75005 Paris, 43 54 48 51, France. Please enclose an IRC.

...AND IN ENGLISH

The Avengers author Dave Rogers is currently putting the finishing touches to his new book on the two Patrick McGoohan series **Danger Man** and **The Prisoner.** The book will cover each story of the two cult series with synopses and episode guides. Dave is confident that the current upheavals at ITC will not affect the publication of his book.

The same publishers have also commissioned a book on **The Saint** written by two new authors. It will cover the exploits of Leslie Charteris' loveable rogue in print, in the movies and on television.

PETER BOSTICK

RE-RUNS

TVS has become the first ITV station to screen the newly acquired episodes of Irwin Allen's **The Time Tunnel,** after viewers were asked to choose from three American series the one they would most like to see.

Over on BBC2 **The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy** commenced its third run of six episodes on May 30th on Tuesday nights between 8.30-9pm, while on Radio 2 on Friday evenings at 10pm the classic 1955 space exploration series **Journey Into Space** is being re-aired.

BRIEFLY...

BATMAN celebrated his 50th anniversary in May, but celebrations were kept to a minimum as the producers of the new **Batman** movie were afraid the event would steal too much of the limelight from their £25 million spectacular opening in America this month.

LIMITED copies of a lavish colour brochure describing in detail the new **Sentinel** project (opposite page) are available from Forbidden Planet's New Oxford Street store at around £15 a copy. KEVIN GLOY

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* ONE ISSUE AND YOU'LL BE WHOOKED *

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SEASON 27 CONFIRMED – SYLVESTER STAYS!

SEASON 27 has, "more or less", been confirmed, and contrary to expectations both within and outside the BBC, it will almost certainly be produced in-house at TV Centre.

After months of intrigue and speculation, the BBC are believed to have done away with all thoughts of ending the series - for the time being at least - after the encouraging ratings for Season 25 were analysed, together with renewed interest in the series generated by such ventures as The Ultimate Adventure stage play and the continued success of associated merchandise. But the proviso remains that the series must continue to fund itself (i.e: with revenue from BBC Enterprises) to a large extent.

SYLVESTER STAYS!

The success of Sylvester McCoy's portrayal of the Doctor is also thought to have prompted the BBC to invest renewed faith in the series, and there will be many jubilant at the news that McCoy has signed for a **fourth** term, making him the third longest-running Doctor to date after Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker, although his low episode count will still be only second to Colin Baker's.

Another notable fact is that Season 27 will take **Doctor Who** into the 1990's, but whether John Nathan-Turner finally severs his links with the series to make way for a whole new era remains to be seen. As he approaches his tenth anniversary in the producer's seat, while not as confident as Margaret Thatcher about marking another term in office, he is certainly keeping his cards close to his chest.

What does seem fairly certain is that Andrew Cartmel will not be script-editing a fourth season, but as to the fate of Ace, Sophie Aldred is understood to be considering an option for another year, but with the attraction of a host of other job offers for the talented actress she may well decide to stay put in Perivale when Season 26's climax - **Ghostlight** - draws to a close.

SEASON 26

'Not only can it clear picket lines, it can also read the news!'

(C). The Daily Mail

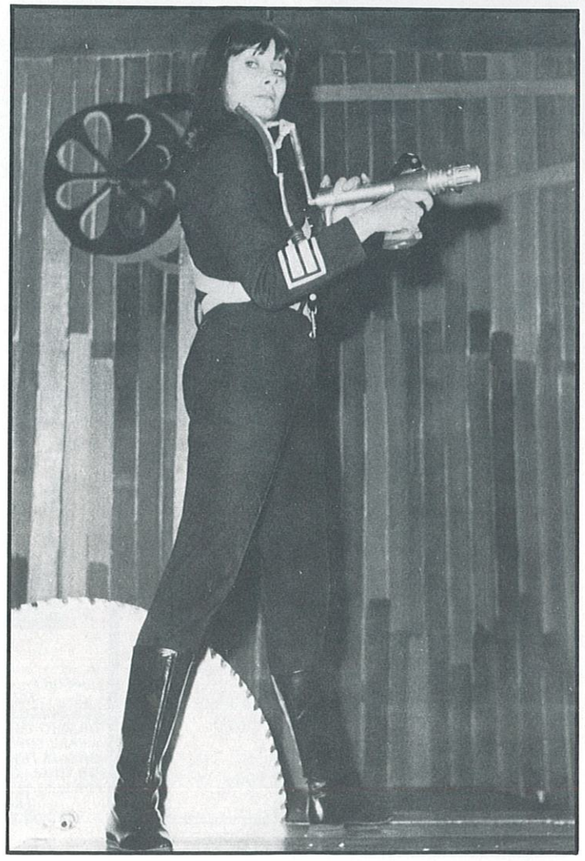
CURSE OF FENRIC narrowly avoided being affected by the recent strikes plaguing the BBC and is safely in the can, although there are fears it could turn out to be another 'Silver Nemesis'.

Director Nicholas Mallett is said to have over-run all the episodes by about ten minutes each and delicate editing will be required to break them down to their standard length without disrupting the plot flow.

Less fortunate was **Battlefield,** which was on location in mid-May, originally for eight days, at an army training camp in Salisbury when the two-day strike hit and recording was brought to a standstill for two days. Although this was made up by staying at the location long enough to complete the recording, the expense this incurred - extra hotel bills, overtime pay etc. - will have to come off the budget for the rest of the season, resulting in less cash for **The Survival** and **Ghostlight** - the revised title for Marc Platt's 'Hammer Horror' finalé. Thus **Battlefield** could go into the annals of **'Who**-lore as the first story to blow its budget without even trying!

Unfortunately the strike remains unresolved, meaning that further disruption is likely. As well as BBC journalists belonging to the NUJ, the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Union - which comprises of ancillary staff like make-up, costumes, props, catering, clerical etc. - are also striking randomly, and it is the latter that affected production of **Battlefield.**

The strike is set to run and run as the unions have rejected the BBC's pay offer and continue to push for a 16% pay rise to bring them more into line with their independent television counterparts. As an idea of the differences in pay, as a BBC producer John Nathan-Turner earns approximately £20,000 a year, whereas he'd earn £30,000 at ITV.



OLD FACES

Aside from the strike, the season is progressing encouragingly.

Going Live! featured a brief location report on the making of **Curse of Fenric** on their last show of the season, but sadly viewers weren't tantalised with a glimpse of the new blood-sucking monsters, the Haemophores.

Of particular note, **Battlefield** sees the return of two more familiar 'faces' from the past. One-time 'companion' Jean(Sara Kingdom)Marsh - who also appeared earlier the same year (1965) in **The Crusade** as Joanna - again plays alongside Nicholas Courtney, though one hopes their characters part on more amiable terms this time round... And the Doctor's old roadster, Bessie, is also involved to an extent, her previous appearance being in 1983's **The Five Doctors**. Also appearing is Z Cars' James Ellis.

NEW DAPOL RANGE

THE LOUIS MARX 60's Dalek toy moulds have finally been purchased by Dapol (see **DWB**#52) who hope to release new castings of the Tricky Action Dalek, the Friction Drive Dalek and the Dalek Bagatelle by Christmas.

Meanwhile production on Severn's Dalek kit has been halted due to the master mould being damaged.

NO REPEATS

IN KEEPING with recent tradition, there are no **Doctor Who** repeats scheduled this summer, the fifth year in a row devoid of repeats.

'ULTIMATE ADVENTURE' UPDATE: DAVID STEPS IN

By our Theatre Correspondent
ROBERT COPE

AT THE TIME of writing Mark Furness' 'Doctor Who' tour is entering its seventh week of performances, and every sign is that the fans and the great British public are adoring it.

Business has, on the whole, been good, with Jon Pertwee still as popular as he ever was in the title rôle.

Up to now there have been only two major incidents during the tour, both involving understudies having to go on. The first occurred on 21st April in Mold when Graeme Smith (Jason) was suffering from food poisoning. Although he performed during act one, it was decided during the interval that he was too ill to complete the evening's run so, with a few minutes notice David Bingham (officially the nightclub M.C.) stepped in as Jason and delighted everyone by hardly putting a foot wrong in front of a highly appreciative audience. David went on to play the rôle for a further two performances before Graeme was well enough to return and in the process showed what a highly talented performer he is.

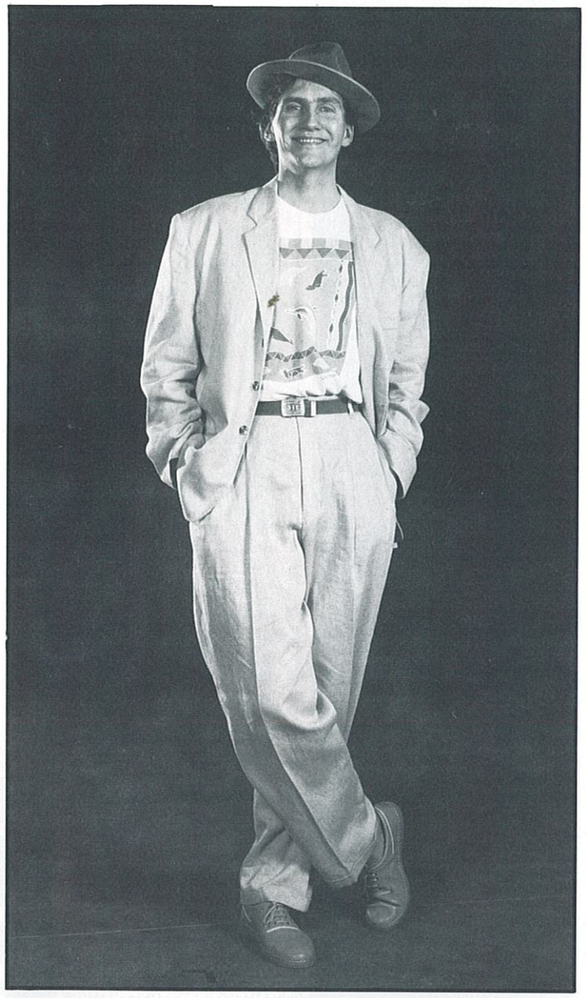
SHOCK

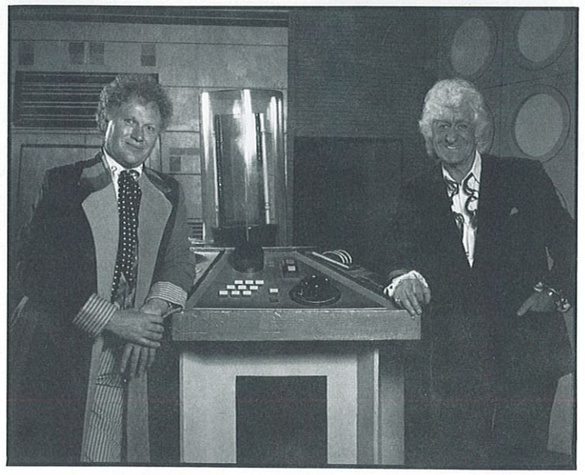
The second occasion in which an understudy was called for was actually something of a shock; it was at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, on 29th April that Jon Pertwee decided he was too ill to go on after five minutes of the matinée performance so the curtain was brought down and ten minutes later the show started afresh with David Banks as the Doctor and Chris Beaumont (the American Envoy) as Karl.

I had been fortunate enough to see the understudy rehearsals and thought then what a revelation it was to see David Banks giving an "excellent" interpretation of the Doctor, and two sell-out houses confirmed this that Saturday, the latter of which rewarded David with a standing ovation!

His costume comprised of a creme two-piece 'summer' suit with a T-shirt and panama hat. He was like Peter Davison's Doctor with authority really, and personally (should I be saying this?) I think he would have made a much better Doctor than Mr.Davison!

I, for one, certainly hope we get to see David giving his interpretation of the Time Lord again sometime during the course of the tour, though hopefully in less stressful circumstances.





BAKER'S PHOTOCALL

Jon, I am pleased to say, quickly shook off his flu with the help of some antibiotics and was back in time for the opening night at Bristol.

The lady Dalek mentioned in last month's Terrance Dicks interview is Claudia Kelly who, whilst playing her other rôle as a flying Antperson, actually broke her fingers in Liverpool. But in true showbiz tradition she not only carried on in great pain until the end of the show, but didn't miss a **single** performance - against doctor's orders! She is now well on her way to recovery and should be flying about again very soon.

Away from all the illness and injuries, Colin Baker came down to Bristol on 3rd May for his production photocall, and it was great to see him back in his familiar costume and raring to go. Colin will be in rehearsal with the company during Jon's final two weeks at Manchester and Oxford, thereby the unique situation arises that there will be, for two weeks, **two** television Doctors on tour - one in rehearsal and one performing!

CHRISTMAS SEASON ?

Rumours are abounding of a Christmas West End season for the show after the UK tour finishes (currently scheduled to end at Canterbury on July 29th) so the Mark Furness office are crossing their fingers that a deal can be reached to take the show into the heart of London's theatre-land and hopefully into one of the world's most famous theatres...

On the merchandise front, there should be available to the public, very soon, exclusive **Ultimate Adventure** T-shirts, badges and baseball caps, but more news on those next issue.

Finally, each Saturday at the climax of each venue a poster signed by Jon Pertwee and Colin Baker and the entire cast will be auctioned off to raise some money for charity.

The first week this was done the poster went for £30, which sets a healthy precedent for raising an impressive sum over the next fifteen weeks or so. I hope fans will make a special effort to bid as much as possible for what I'm sure will become valuable collector's items in the future and, more importantly, for what is a very good cause.

NEXT ISSUE:
The return of Colin Baker!

PERTWEE LAUNCHES NEW VIDEOS

JON PERTWEE will launch BBC Video's new range of 'Doctor Who' releases on June 5th at the new HMV store at the Tottenham Court Road end of Oxford Street.

The signing will take place at 1pm amid a huge promotional campaign which in the past was usually reserved for the Virgin Megastore further down the road (please note this is **not** the HMV store opposite Selfridges).

STRIKING COVERS

The three new releases - **The Daleks, The Time Warrior** and **The Ark in Space** - have all been adorned with striking covers comprised of photographic/artwork montages (see pages 18-19) in keeping with the previous release - **Terror of the Zygons** - which generated very favourable feedback. Whereas the latter two are in full colour (and, incidentally, different to the Australian covers as shown in DWB#s 63 and 65), **The Daleks** tapes are in duo-tone - blue for tape one (subtitled The Dead Planet) and red for tape two (subtitled The Expedition in keeping with episode five's title with which the tape resumes). However the jacket does commit a major blunder in depicting **'Death'** Daleks, circa 1974, in the bottom right hand corner of each cover! The two tapes are packaged in clear cellophane.

THIS ISSUE: Jeremy Bentham assesses the **'Doctor Who'** releases to date, and next month we review the three new videos...

PUZZLE

WHAT DO Doctor Who's biggest fan, a one-time Target cover artist and a former **Doctor Who** production office secretary have in common ?

A: Sarah Lee and Paul Mark Tams have teamed together on Ian Levine's Sidewalk record label for a truly ghastly song titled Take Away The Rain(!).

HOPES FADE FOR MOVIE

TIME is running out for 'Doctor Who - The Movie', and staff on the project have been told it's been cancelled indefinitely.

TOO AMBITIOUS

Coast To Coast, the producers, paid the BBC more than £50,000 in 1987 for a two-year option in which to make the film, but sources close to the movie suggest it fell through primarily because their intentions were too ambitious in wanting to make it the biggest monster movie ever - with around **180** monsters - which bogged the project down from the start. And because the film was so hyped up, they found they couldn't live up to expectations.

With the rights to produce a **Doctor Who** film running out this year, the BBC will have the options back to lease to another company from 1990.

Incidentally Ken Russell - director of many of the arty films of the late 60's/early 70's like Tommy, The Boyfriend and Lair Of The White Worm - is understood to have been approached by Coast to Coast to direct the movie.

BRIEFLY...

Marvel Comics are holding a **Doctor Who** Magazine 10th Anniversary Work-In at the Westminster Comic Mart at Central Hall between 12-4pm on October 7th. Admission for the display and talks by some of the magazine's staff is free.

The Daily Mail recently reported that in March the Earth narrowly missed a devastating collision with a 400-million ton meteorite travelling at 50,000mph. Scientists believe we missed the disaster by just 4 hours - a mere flick of an eyelid in terms of the Universe...and the asteroid has been codenamed 'Nemesis'...(!)

If you're attending Timelord '89 in Columbus this September you'll be staggered at the names of two recent recruits to the guest list. Described in their promotion as 'Assistant **Doctor Who** producer' is Gary Downie (in reality one-time AFM and now occasional production manager), and hopefully Ron Katz will have surfaced by then to appear in the capacity of "Fan' guest of honour'!! Can you wait ?!

BRING ON THE CLOWNS!

- **IN ISSUE TEN OF THE FRAME:**

We talk to Costume Designer Rosalind Ebbutt and Make-Up Designer Dee Baron about their work on Doctor Who

We have an exclusive feature on the mystery of the lost Peter Cushing/Doctor Who Radio plays!

We interview veteran actor Edmund Warwick Who appeared as Darrius in "The Keys of Marinus" and as the Robot Doctor in "The Chase"

We reprint for the first time, an interview with William Hartneli from 1965

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THE FRAME

STARS COME OUT FOR HILLSBOROUGH

SYLVESTER McCOY, Colin Baker and Sophie Aldred were among the many well-known celebrities who took part in an impromptu concert in Brighton on May 1st to raise money for the Hillsborough Disaster Fund.

APPEAL

The idea for the concert was triggered by an appeal in the local newspaper - The Brighton and Hove Leader - to raise money for the injured and bereaved from the football disaster in April, and the wheels were set in motion when Brighton Council offered to provide the famous Dome Theatre free of charge.

Doctor Who producer John Nathan-Turner - who has his own production company based in nearby Saltdean - was called upon to direct the event and he appointed Gary Downie as stage manager and close friends Ian Fraser supervised lighting while Fiona Cumming supplied some of the costumes from her own company.

The actors were approached with very little notice. Sylvester had appeared earlier in the day on BBC1's Open Air in Manchester to talk about TV SF cult series, and had to fly to Heathrow straight after where he jumped in a cab to East Sussex in order to attend rehearsals in time. While he did a couple of sketches - one in which he teamed up with a former TISWAS colleague - Sophie had dug out a few of her song books which had been residing in Sylvester's home and gave an equally splendid performance. JNT certainly knows how to pick multi-talented Doctors and companions!

Colin Baker attempted to recite some prose, despite being humorously interrupted every other line by the MC Hugh(Delta)Lloyd, and appeared on stage for the closing ceremony - the first time he and Sylvester have appeared in public together - to sing You'll Never Walk Alone. Other star names included veteran star-gazer Patrick Moore, singer Anita Harris and EastEnder Wendy Richard.

Despite receiving plenty of publicity, unfortunately the theatre was only half full, strangely mirroring the ratings Nathan-Turner pulls on TV, and the fact it was put on in little over a week was painfully evident at times.

EGOS

However, in all the concert donated £2,950.50 of the takings to the fund, which would have been significantly boosted had two of the individuals in charge of the production not let egos get in the way and appear to lose sight of what the event was actually about and accepted a £150 pledge on behalf of **DWB** and photographer Sheldon Collins who was personally affected by the tragedy.

Instead a donation has been made direct to the fund via the Liverpool Supporters' Club.

Photos: The stunning Sophie Aldred and Sylvester McCoy modelling his new sombre attire. (Photographs (c) and reproduced courtesy of The Brighton and Hove Leader)

SYLVESTER'S HEADPHONES: THE LAST WORD

Jackie Leeper, Chicago, USA (20-4-89)
Like Mark Wright (DWB#64 letters), I too was somewhat dismayed with Sylvester McCoy's apparent assumptions about "typical" **Doctor Who** fans as related in articles from The Guardian and Today (DWB#62).

I realise that the Whiz Kid-type fans who ask the type of questions described in the articles do exist. However, I hope that by now Sylvester realises that we aren't all "nauseating little weirdos". There are actually some of us who respect his right to privacy when he wishes it, and who enjoy talking with him about things other than his television rôle.

Incidentally I did get to meet Sylvester at Magnus Opus in Greenville, South Carolina. Having read the above newspaper articles before the convention I admit to having been a bit "gun shy" about meeting him. However my misgivings were soon dispelled. I found him to be quite personable and friendly, and I believe that most of the questions asked of him were reasonably intelligent ones. Yes, I know that actors are paid to attend cons and mingle and all of that, but he went around talking with fans during some of the **evening** activities, and even made the rounds to some of the room parties; he actually seemed to **enjoy** associating with fans.

As for Sylvester's alleged "lashing out" at "those fans who were most critical of his performance after Season 24", I feel that his response was justified if the criticism Mark is referring to are the comments made by certain 'professional fans' and the press (as described in the DWB 50th Issue Interview with Sylvester). I'm not advocating unconditional praise, but I see no connection between pompous, self-important diatribes and constructive criticism. Also, I find a certain double-standard present in the parallel reference to Peter Davison; nowhere did I find any mention of Davison's response to **his** critics.

Jackie Roe, London E11
...It seems Sylvester is being condemned for adopting the same defensive body language that tens of thousands of other Underground users employ to make their journeys tolerable.

Mr.Wright lives in Yorkshire so I suppose he is fortunate not to have to use the tube every day. Personal stereo headphones go a long way to drowning out the noise. Avoiding eye contact with people is not rude, it's a simple but effective way of not talking to people. I see from the Jon Pertwee interview (DWB#64) that he does the same, and no-one is going to accuse Mr.Pertwee of being bad-mannered.

On the occasions that I've met Mr.McCoy he has never been anything but courteous, perhaps a little bewildered, but certainly polite. Why should fans assume that the actor playing the Doctor should automatically become public property ? Perhaps it's this kind of attitude that makes Sylvester appear stand-offish.

I think that he **was** right to reply to the criticism levelled at him after Season 24. The rabid rantings of some fans during Season 24 made me wonder why they bother watching the series at all! Some of the comments levelled were downright nasty, and what right do fans have to level professional criticism at an actor ? The most we should do is express a personal opinion.

DWB#65: "AN ENJOYABLE READ"

Ian Parkes, Nottingham (3-5-89)
DWB#65 was a very enjoyable read. No JNT-bashing, a good book review and a reasonably interesting interview. I specifically enjoyed the **Doomwatch** overview (how about a similar article on the **Quatermass** serials of the 1950's ?) and the Season 25 Retrospective. I wholeheartedly agree with the opinions of Darren Short and Robert John Williamson about **The Happiness Patrol**; personally I do not think that **'Who** is the forum for political satire. I was horrified to hear that the Daleks in **Remembrance** were to have been Red and Blue, with Davros commanding the Blue Daleks! Surely this type of thing is best left to Spitting Image or Radio 4's week ending.

Jonathan Burt, Surrey (3-5-89)
DWB#65 was probably the best of the new lot. The inclusion of the other material was not as obtrusive as it has been, and the **Doctor Who** content was really excellent, making for a very good read. The monsters interview with the Lovells was of particular interest. However please don't reduce the **'who** content as suggested by James Kelly's letter. DWB should always be a predominantly **'Who** 'zine. This was the series which started it and in its present format it's fine.
ED: We have no intention of altering the present format.

Kenneth Horlock, Kent (10-5-89)
Thanks for DWB#65, good stuff as ever.

I'm not sure about the notes on the back of **The Time Warrior** video cover printed on page 5. Surely the idea should be to set the scene, not tell the story (..."Linx is killed by a local archer and his spaceship blown up")!

Paul Butler's letter on page eight queries the comic on which **Lost in Space** was said to have been based. The comic, by Gold Key, **did** precede the TV series (I have some of them and the earliest - which I believe is the first - is dated 1963. The TV series began in 1965). It was called Space Family Robinson In Space and I think that's where the two projects overlap as, I believe, Irwin Allen also wanted that title but, as it had already been used, had to settle with just **Lost in Space.** The comic featured the adventures of Craig and June Robinson and their son and daughter Tim and Tam. They operated Earth's first space station and were lost in space when violent cosmic explosions sent the station drifting. There was no saboteur and no "bubble-headed booby", the only connection with the TV series being its name and the name of its family. So I'd suggest that neither was based on the other - it was just a coincidence.

Going back to DWB#64, and it's funny it should arrive when it did. The previous night the BBC advertised their 'new look' Radio Times with a selection of their top stars telling us how wonderful it was. One of those stars was Sylvester McCoy in his **Doctor Who** garb (the Radio Times doesn't prmote **Doctor Who** but **Doctor Who** promotes the Radio Times!), and I thought it positive that the BBC rated the show high enough. It's ironic in a way because as I read about all those old shows (**Randall & Hopkirk, Timeslip** etc.) being considered for re-making in your de-regulation feature, the thought struck me that had **Doctor Who** been axed back at the end of Season 6 or 7, as was possible at one time, it could've been another of those shows under such consideration. Imagine it: as a revival it would have been Powell's brainchild, awarded maximum publicity - including a Radio Times cover - and screened in its old Saturday slot. And it would have been made in the way everybody remembered it, complete with top-notch production team to make certain all went smoothly.

In short it might have been taken **seriously** by everyone from programme planners to Radio Times' editor. Heck, it may even have run for over 20 weeks!

I also had to agree with the issue's "80's Cybermen Just Aren't Scarey" item. How true. For me the decline and stagnation of the Cybermen has run alongside the show itself. Both need a new look as soon as possible. I mean, the current Cybermen aren't bad, they're just played to death. Next Cyber-story, if there is one, there must be no JNT, no David Banks, and no **gold!** Indeed it could be a good time for a 'Genesis of the Cybermen' story to take them back to their roots and remind everybody what they **really** are and can do. At the moment they're just being used as celebrities for the special occasion. There's much more to them than that.

Steve Rogers, Suffolk (1-5-89)
DWB#65 has to be the best new look issue to date. Your high standard of interviews continues with Terrance Dicks and the Lovells and also of great merit were the **STNG** feature, the **Daleks' Masterplan#1** and the '88 Readers Poll Results (what a wag Mark Wyman is!). On the subject of episode guides, TimeScreen only does guides for British programmes so maybe you could cover shows like **Star Trek, V, Lost in Space** etc.?

If it's any consolation to Jonathan Hayward I have also 'lost' several SAEs to DWAS. I'm sure this all helps to fuel people's apathy - why bother writing with an SAE when you won't now even get a reply!

It was good to read that Colin Baker has another chance to play the Doctor. I certainly wish him every success and I hope people give him a chance to prove himself before they start slagging him off. Criticism of someone's work **before** it has been seen is unprofessional to say the least. On this point how does any of us know that Nick Mallett's talents as a director haven't greatly improved...

Austen Broadbelt, Fishburn (16-4-89)
Just when I thought dramatic values , excellent production and inspired casting were back in fashion, we learn Nicholas Mallett is to return, dragging Nicholas Parsons behind him! Is there really any

Cont'd page 13 >

AVON: A TERRIBLE ASPECT

By our BLAKE'S 7 correspondent
John H.Elsen

Avon tossed the gun to the floor. "Maco is taking me to Lupos", he said, "where I'll learn the finer arts." He looked down at the Co-ordinator's body. "In the end, though, it will always come to this."

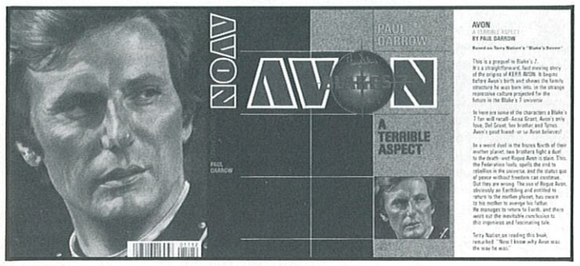
Amiyak seemed on the verge of tears. "Then there is no hope for us."

There's always hope. But, when you live in exciting times, don't always expect your hopes to be fulfilled."

Amiyal moved closer to him. "You're a dead man!" he said.

"Oh, I think the Federation might be prepared to overlook this... They might even approve of it."

"I mean, you're alive but, inside yourself, you are cold and dead...You're the face of the Federation that I can no longer bear to look at."



AVON: A Terrible Aspect is a guide to manipulation; sexual, personal and political. It tells of Avon, a child who became a rebel through events he thought he could control. As a young man he was trained to adapt to all things, even...but that would be telling! He became a rebel with a cause - himself! His mistake was believing he could stay within the system, without being subject to it. Too late he discovered the power he thought he held was false.

As predicted in my preview (DWB#63), trust is an important factor. Too late, Avon realises that you can trust society. You can trust it to consistently act against and to be as corrupt as, the individual, the survivor. One mirrors and distorts the other. Unsurprisingly, given the way Darrow has approached the story there is no sense of betrayal in the book. Violent death is accepted, expected even, in the high orders. It is almost a release when a character knows he is going to die. They, after all, have nothing to fear, and no political/social traps left to avoid.

Those that have studied political history may find shielded references to the social policies of Napolean, Mussolini and others in these "exciting times". These and many other 'Terrible Aspects' will be discussed in a fan forum on the book, which will appear in a few issues time. Any one wishing to take part, drop me a line care of **DWB.** In the meantime, **buy the book**, read it, and think about the questions it deliberately raises and refuses to answer. The legend of the enigma lives on!!!

DARROW STILL MAKING NEWS

Many of you will have seen the Storyboard presentation Making News, featuring Paul Darrow as George Parnell, the tremendously sincere and wonderfully theatrical news anchorman (I get the feeling he was taking a swipe at Sir Alistair), pretending to be everyone's friend whilst making sure everyone knows who's the star of the show.

Robert Banks Stewart, ex-**Doctor Who** writer and creator of Shoestring, Bergerac and Call Me Mister, is the producer of this project. Thames' reaction to the pilot is said to be good, although no commitment to a series has been made. It will not only be ratings that determine this, however. As with past Story-boards more will depend on whether viewers liked the characters and the situations. If so, it will be viewed as a worthwhile series to make.

If a series does go ahead cast changes are possible, either because of other commitments or mixed feelings about their characters. It would appear that Darrow is safe, though, to continue in the rôle of Parnell.

REPRINTS

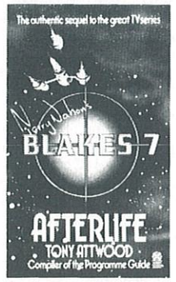
In my article on bootlegging in DWB#64, I mentioned the lack of **Blake's 7** merchandise presently available in the U.S., and that publishers were trying to catch up with demand. The first sign of this has been the recently released reprints of the Trevor Hoyle books (under the Citadel Press label) which were originally published in the U.K. between 1978 and 1981.

This news will be of interest to many British fans, who missed out on buying them the first time round - it must be remembered that fan interest increased greatly **after** the end of the series (1981).

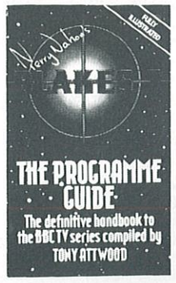
Blake's 7 - The First Adventure was originally printed as simply **Blake's 7** by the publishers Arthur Barker in 1977, to coincide with screenings of the first series in early 1978. Since then it has had numerous reprints in Sphere. Undoubtedly the easiest to track down in the junk shops, the original paperback featured (naturally enough) the old logo, and a photo of the Liberator on the cover. The hardcover version, on the other hand, is **extremely** rare - I should know, I've been trying to get one for **eight** years! The new U.S. version utilises the new logo, and an unfortunate 'propulsion' effect attached to an illustration of the Liberator (similar to the one used on the first BBC Video release).

The second book, **Project Avalon,** was originally published by Arrow in 1979. Although launched to coincide with the second series, it featured episodes from the first (indeed neither the second nor the third series have been published). The first edition, featuring a photo of Gareth Thomas on the cover (which is taken as the basis on the U.S. cover) is quite hard to find. Later reprints feature a still of three Federation Pursuit Ships, after Gareth Thomas left the series. These are easier to find. I do not know of a hardback edition - can anyone enlighten me ?

Scorpio Attack, originally printed by BBC Enterprises (who presumably decided it was about time they started cashing in) was first published in 1981, and featured a publicity shot of the fourth season crew on the cover. This has been replaced with a boring starscape and a **two**-legged Liberator illustration (with statitory propulsion effect) in the distance. The original BBC paperback is easy to find, and the hardback edition can sometimes be found at conventions etc.



These three titles join Tony Attwood's **Programme Guide** and his follow up novel **Afterlife** (which did for **Blake's 7** what 'Turlough and the Earthlink Dilemma' did for **Doctor Who**), as well as Paul Darrow's new novel **Avon: A Terrible Aspect** (as an aside, the **Blake's 7 Technical Manual Volume One** will definitely be reviewed next month) in the Target/Citadel Press/Lyle Stuart stable. These novels are printed in the U.S. under the Citadel Press label, and will undoubtedly find their way to specialist shops in this country during the next few months.



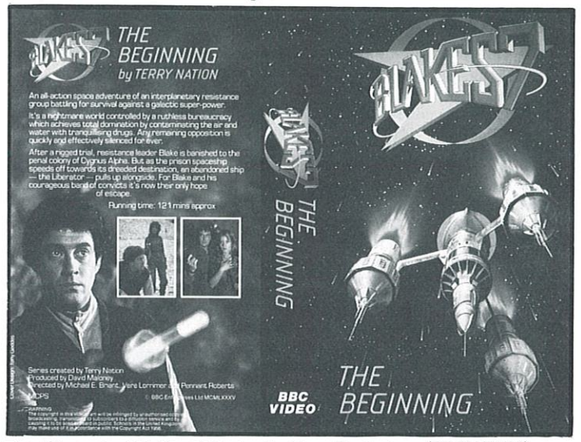
With so much interest in **Blake's 7** over in the U.S., talk is abound that with 40 episodes still unnovelised, new TV novelisations will soon be commissioned. Trevor Hoyle had better buy a new typewriter ribbon!

JOHN H.ELSEN

VIDEO OVERVIEW

EARLIER THIS YEAR the BBC released the 'Blake's Seven' video tape 'Aftermath' in Australia.

This is the fourth **Blake's Seven** video produced by the corporation, tapes which have received limited distribution due to their exorbitant cost, a fate which has befallen many other potentially interesting tapes from BBC Video such as **The Moon Stallion** and **The Box of Delights.**


BLAKE'S 7
THE BEGINNING
by TERRY NATION
An all-action space adventure of an interplanetary resistance group battling for survival against a galactic super-power.
It's a nightmare world controlled by a ruthless bureaucracy which achieves total domination by contaminating the air and water with brain-altering drugs. Any remaining opposition is quickly and effectively silenced for ever.
After a rigged trial, resistance leader Blake is banished to the penal colony of Cygnus Alpha. But as the prison spaceship speeds off towards its dreaded destination, an abandoned ship — the Liberator — pulls up alongside. For Blake and his courageous band of convicts it's now their only hope of escape.
Running time: 121 mins approx
Series created by Terry Nation
Produced by David Maloney
Directed by Michael E. Briant, Vere Lorrimer, Pennant Roberts
BBC VIDEO
THE BEGINNING

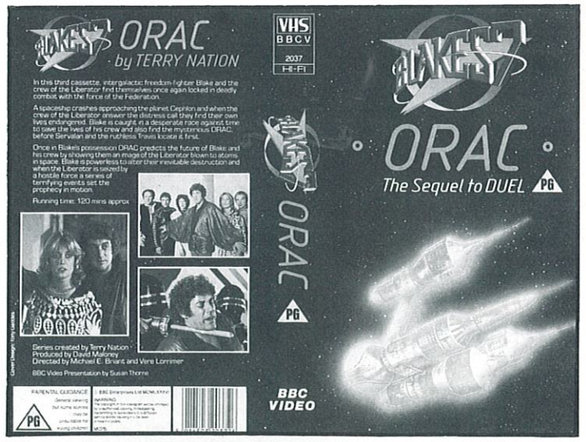
Retailing at £24.95 **Blake's 7 - The Beginning** (BBCV/B200) was released on the 15th of July 1985. Although the price was a little steep for the average fan, there was little in the way of 'budget' video at the time and compared to the average cost of a feature-length tape, this was about acceptable. As with all three tapes released so far, the cover depicted the Liberator - and on at least one release a budding artist had painted in engine flames shooting from its three gun housings, suggesting that these were actually engines!

The tape featured the first four episodes from Season One edited together; **The Way Back, Space Fall, Cygnus Alpha** and **Time Squad,** penned by its creator Terry Nation, as have all the episodes released in the UK so far. As the tape ran for only 120 minutes, and each episode was originally about 50 minutes long, a lot of heavy editing was necessitated.

The Way Back, which introduced Blake's previous involvement with rebellious organisations, the reawakening of his freedom-fighter's indignation at the sight of a Federation massacre and his show trial and expulsion to Cygnus Alpha is well handled. At roughly 15 minutes long this tale rattles along without the actual pediophilla allegations and the murder of Blake's defence council. **Space Fall,** which introduces The Liberator, is almost complete and runs nicely into **Cygnus Alpha** as many of the minor cast members and sets were the same. With twenty of the less interesting minutes subtracted this episode serves as a nice introduction to Gan and Vila's characters which were less obvious in the previous episodes. **Time Squad** is the episode that introduced Cally and so is present by necessity rather than choice, and the editing reflects this. As few fans of the series had any first seasons on video - prior to the SuperChannel screenings - this taped served as a reminder of how the show started off, and is quite an enjoyable alternative to the original episodes. It was also refreshing to see the initial direction and style of the show as opposed to the later offerings from the Scorpio crew which would still be fresher in the viewer's mind. Fans of **Ace of Wands** can also get a glimpse of a bearded Tarot when Michael Mackenzie appears in **Space Fall.**

BLAKE'S 7
DUEL
by TERRY NATION
VHS
BBCV
2031
The second cassette in this all-action space adventure contains the story of the courageous band of convicts waging guerrilla war against the evil and corrupt Galactic federation.
The crew of the Liberator, led by Blake, are becoming a galactic legend. The Federation needs Blake eliminated — immediately! Supreme Commander Servalan assigns the task to the deadly Travis — his orders simply to seek, locate and destroy Blake's 7.
Travis and his Mutoid crew clash with Blake in a fierce struggle over the Federation's secret cypher machine and again in desperate hand-to-hand combat on a mysterious dead planet. Finally they confront each other on a barren ice world as Blake attempts to rescue the resistance leader Avalon. This time however Travis is expecting him and a terrible trap awaits.
Running time: 120 mins approx
Series created by Terry Nation
Produced by David Maloney
Directed by Michael E. Briant, Vere Lorrimer
BBC Video Presentation by Susan Thorne
PARENTAL GUIDANCE
PG
BBC VIDEO
DUEL
The Sequel to THE BEGINNING

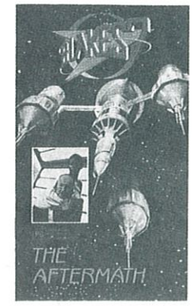
Officially described as **The Sequel to The Beginning, Blake's 7 - Duel** (BBCV/B 2031) was released on the 21st of April 1986. One minute longer than its predecessor and retailing at the same price, this tape contained nearly all of **Seek - Locate - Destroy, Duel** and **Project Avalon,** again all by Nation. Another factor linking the episodes was Travis, the deformed sadist employed by Servalan - who was also introduced for the first time - to hunt down Blake. Travis appears in each of these first season episodes as he renews acquaintances with his old enemy, engages in close combat and finally sets a cunning trap. The best of these episodes is **Project Avalon** in which, instead of trading insults and using old **Star Trek** plots (i.e.**Duel,** or should that read **Arena** ?), the forces of The Federation, led by Travis, and Blake's team attempt to outwit one another in a plot with more twists and turns than an exceptionally twisty turny thing. **Duel,** despite its lack of originality, shows a flare of direction from the late Douglas Camfield, working on his only installment of the show. This episode was also the only one to abandon Dudley Simpson's incidental music - a frequent trait of Camfield's - and rely instead on atmospheric stock music. It will be noted that **Seek - Locate - Destroy** is the only episode from the first two seasons that has not been repeated on SuperChannel, making this video a little more collectable ?


BLAKE'S 7
ORAC
by TERRY NATION
VHS
BBCV
2037
HI-FI
In this third cassette, intergalactic freedom-fighter Blake and the crew of the Liberator find themselves once again locked in deadly combat with the force of the Federation.
A spaceship crashes approaching the planet Cepheon and when the crew of the Liberator answer the distress call they find their own lives endangered. Blake is caught in a desperate race against time to save the lives of his crew and also find the mysterious ORAC before Servalan and the ruthless Travis locate it first.
Once in Blake's possession ORAC predicts the future of Blake and his crew by showing them an image of the Liberator blown to atoms in space. Blake is powerless to alter their inevitable destruction and when the Liberator is seized by a hostile force a series of terrifying events set the prophecy in motion.
Running time: 120 mins approx
Series created by Terry Nation
Produced by David Maloney
Directed by Michael E. Briant and Vere Lorrimer
BBC Video Presentation by Susan Thorne
PARENTAL GUIDANCE
PG
BBC VIDEO
ORAC
The Sequel to DUEL
PG

The most recent tape to be released in this country is **Blake's 7 - Orac,** billed as **The sequel to Duel** (BBCV/B 2037). This found its way into the shops on July 21st 1986, cost £24.95 and ran for 120 minutes. By this time videos were appearing in the shops costing less than £10, so the **Blake's 7** tapes tended to remain on the shelves - indeed if they got distributed at all.

Orac contained the last two episodes from Season One; **Deliverance** and **Orac,** which were intended to flow into one another in the first place, and indeed were edited as such for a BBC repeat in December 1978 just prior to their resolution in the new season. The third story, **Redemption** from the second season, follows on from the final moments of **Orac,** which are cut from the original, but we do catch the reprieve in this episode. All the same, this still leaves **Orac** speaking with two voices; that of Derek Farr in the scenes from **Orac** before the more familiar tones of Peter Tuddenham took over for the last three seasons.

The fourth tape, **Blake's 7 - Aftermath,** has only been released to date in Australia by Polygram Australia who were BBC Records' old distributors in this country. PG rated, as with the others, and retailing at the reasonable price of $29.95 (approximately £15), it contains two more Terry Nation episodes, **Aftermath** and **Powerplay** which began the third season, and **Sarcophagus** by acclaimed SF writer Tanith Lee - her first of two superb scripts for the series and also the first non-



Nation **Blake's 7** video to be released on video - also from the third season.

The tape is edited into a dramatic tale of the evacuation on Zen's advice after the Liberator sustains damage in the battle with the aliens after **Star One** - the superb second season climax. Dayna Mellanby is introduced as she helps both Avon and Servalan, who strike up their strange relationship for the first time here. On arriving back on the Liberator they encounter Tarrant who is posing as a Federation Captain acting with a ruthless squad led by Section Leader Klegg. All episodes are examples of when the programme was at its height of popularity and quality, though how they will be affected by the surgery performed on them to link them into 90 or so minutes remains to be seen until it becomes available here. One can also look forward to the reissues of the already available BBC Videos in this range at a price more easily affordable to fans and general public alike.

By MARK FULTON and NIGEL ANDREWS

BLAKE INTO THE 90's

AS OF WRITING there are distant rumours abounding of the long-awaited 'Blake's Seven' re-run which, if it should materialise, will probably occupy what is currently the 'Buck Rogers in the 25th Century' slot on BBC2's DEFII.

Since that 'tragic' night (now, incredibly, over seven years ago), when the heroes of over ten million people were ruthlessly cut down by Federation troops, we have clamoured endlessly - and futilely - for repeats or a remounting of the series. At the time, of course, the Beeb was persuaded to re-screen the final series in fairly short order, but since then not a single **Blake** repeat has been seen in this country (except on SuperChannel). No more **Blake's Seven** will ever be made, and perhaps rightly not, but this article will attempt to assess how the series might fare in 1989. Would it draw new followers, or was it a child of its time, and something to which only its old fans would tune in ?

The first thing to consider is what kind of a series **Blake's Seven** was.

It was a fairly straightforward show, and at a time when Graham Williams was turning **Doctor Who** into a comedy this was well received. "Television science fiction has got too self-consciously jokey lately" commented Stanley Reynolds, reviewing it in The Times. "Terry Nation's new series is straight, with real villains". Furthermore, unlike **Star Trek, Doomwatch** and, occasionally, **Doctor Who, Blake's Seven** never tried to make moral or political points. It made no effort to throw ideas at the viewers. Blake and his loyal (most of the time) band of followers jazzed around the cosmos in their stolen starship striking against the hated Federation at every opportunity. It was a simple good guys v. bad guys show. Almost. The trouble was that the good guys were not really good at all. They were all admitted criminals of one kind or another, and this was something that tended to get forgotten. The Federation may have been oppressive, but it was not corrupt. Nor was it evil and, in its own way, it did keep the peace. Blake may have been a righteous crusader against injustice, but the injustice was official, and in fighting it Blake was criminalising himself. So how would a situation like this be regarded today ?

Quite well, I think, for there are parallels among us now even more so than in 1978/79. Take the non-payment campaign against the Community Charge (or Poll Tax), for example. Here we have people advocating crime and being thought to be on the side of right. It is an old idea that always finds favour somewhere.

On the rare occasions when the show did lean towards a bit of moralising, it tended to be on shaky ground. In **Star One,** the last episode of the Second Season, they are about (they think) to destroy the nerve centre of the Federation, and thus the Federation itself. Cally asks Blake if they can justify this since it is an action that will kill an enormous amount of people. Blake - **the title character of the series** - takes the view that "It has to be. Don't you see, Cally, if we stop now then all we have done is senseless killing and destruction. Without purpose, without reason. We **have** to win." This suggestion, that if a terrorist achieves his goal he ceases to be a terrorist, is not a happy one. And with the current upsurge in terrorism worldwide, it is one that we could do without.

On a more mundane level, though, there are plenty of other things which could count for or against the programme on a re-run. It may sound obvious, but a repeat is not like seeing a show for the first time, especially a show that went on for as long as this one. There are memories of it which will lead to expectations, and most of these memories will be from around the time that the programme came to its end. This is a fact that may lead to problems, and the first of these I have hinted at in the title.

It is not often that a programme loses its star and continues regardless. It is to the credit of this show that it did so, despite many facetious questions at the time (1980) such as by Noel Edmonds on The Multi-Coloured Swap Shop: "How can you have a programme called **Blake's Seven** when you haven't got a Blake and there aren't seven of you ?" In spite of losing Gareth Thomas, **Blake's Seven** became even more successful in its second two seasons than its first, and it is in that form that it has been remembered these last seven years. When it went off the air in a blaze of gunfire, and ever since, one aspect of the show dominated. It became perceived as a show about this one man: Avon. We have discussed the man's descent into insanity, his relationships with women, how he came eventually to be as partial against the Federation as the man he deposed when formerly he had been indifferent. His early life has been explored in a book by the actor (see elsewhere this issue). Avon rules! Avon lives! But what of Blake ? Many people tuning in for the first time now, having heard about the programme but not really seen much of it; or those who only saw the later or last series, and even those who watched it at the time but are not 'fans' as such, could be in for something of a surprise.

In the first episode they won't even **see** Avon, and when they do, they probably won't recognise him. Eventually, it will become evident that they are not seeing what they expected to see. The character that they have heard so much about seems to be taking a back seat. Who on Earth is this Blake fellow ? Who does **he** think he is ? In my view, it is this, more than anything, that might dampen initial enthusiasm for the re-runs. The same thing happened with M*A*S*H. When that ended we remembered the characters that ended with it. When it started again, they just weren't there. Where is BJ ? Where is Winchester ? Where is Colonel Potter ? Who is Trapper ? Who is Henry Blake ?

Where is Orac ? Where are Dayna and Tarrant ? Who is Jenna ? If the series were to be re-shown in its entirety (all 52 episodes), the Beeb should consider carefully whether to show them back to back, as they have with M*A*S*H, or split into the original four seasons, as they did on the last **Star Trek** re-run. My own view is that the latter option is preferable. To show it all with no, or little, gap between seasons would expose cruelly the inconsistencies between them. How would viewers take, for example, to two different actors playing Travis with only two episodes between them ? And, having got used to Blake and Jenna (Gan having met his end by this stage), how readily could they accept the very abrupt reversal in the situation aboard the Liberator between **Star One** and **Aftermath** ? Suddenly these two characters just aren't there, and the lack of any scenes to explain their absence would glare out. Servalan and Avon seem to have a rapport which, since they have hardly met before now, is totally wrong, and how could she possibly know that Blake is out of the way and that Avon is in charge ? Even **Avon** didn't know at that stage. On first screening, the long gap between the seasons covered up the changes, but that will not happen this time. Suddenly, the whole nature of the series changes. No more have we got Boring-old-Blake-crusading-against-the-Federation, but a straightforward science fiction adventure in which we don't see >

POTENTIAL FORTUNE IN BLAKE'S 7 MONTHLY BACK ISSUE!

All of you still holding (hoarding?) back issues of **Blake's 7** Monthly (Marvel's short-lived DWM-style periodical of the early 80's) may be interested to know the going rate for a single copy in the U.S. at the moment is an astronomical **$15!**

This news will be of particular interest to those who bought up complete collections for a fiver during the slump in British interest circa 1984-86 (thank God those days are now behind us!).

Congratulations, that £5 investment is now worth about $400!

Who said the only way to make real money is on the Stock Exchange!! JHE

the Federation at all for several episodes. Likewise, between the third and fourth seasons, Avon seems to have a change of heart and character, and re-starts the anti-Federation crusade. We accepted these inconsistencies at the time because the previous season was already memories. If the next season followed on only a week later that would not be the case.

Another thing that might count against the show is the length of time which it takes for it to get going. **Star Cops** suffered in a similar way. The number of people who say of it "Oh, **that**. I watched the first episode but I didn't see anymore" is quite staggering, and that was just **one** episode. It is not until episode five of **Blake's Seven** that the seven in question are seen as such. One might be forgiven (as many were) for thinking that one is watching a serial, not a series, since **The Way Back, Spacefall, Cygnus Alpha** and **Time Squad** (and, to an extent, **The Web**) can be seen as a four-part story telling how the Seven came to be. Indeed, the first of the BBC videos and the Trevor Hoyle novelisation treat it as such. Again, this is not a thing that people seeing **Blake's Seven** for the first time would expect, and one thing that has certainly notably changed in the last seven years is a thing called viewer tolerance. One cannot rely on viewers' loyalty or patience now in the way that one could. If their expectations aren't fulfilled they switch off, and if something isn't over and done in a very few episodes the viewers are likely not to tune in at all, as demonstrated by the monumental drop in **Doctor Who** viewing figures. Certainly I cannot see **Blake's Seven** pulling the audience that it did on the first run.

A major consideration in the success or failure of **Blake's Seven** in 1989 has, obviously, to be the way in which it was produced. 1977 was not really all that long ago. Did they make science fiction differently in those days ? Perhaps, but not tremendously. **Blake's Seven** has not dated all that much, and by no means to the degree that **UFO** or **Lost in Space** have arguably dated. The first sight of the Liberator flight deck, for example, still has the viewer catching his (or, more likely, her) breath. It remains, in my opinion, just about the best set ever seen in a British science fiction programme because it is so different in concept to anything else. "Look at that instrumentation!" Avon exclaims. What instrumentation ? Quite. The only thing that lets it down is the small console down by recreation area which falls back into the buttons and flashing lights mode that the rest of the set so brilliantly avoids. Scorpio is an embarrassment in comparison. In fact, one of the most interesting things about **Blake's Seven** is that the standard of visual effects in the first three seasons is far higher than in the fourth. The model shots are universally convincing. The Liberator guns did not fire a beam of any kind, which would certainly look tackier now than then, whereas the guns in series four gave silly little spurts of smoke. The hardware generally was much more robust and the whole thing more believable before Vere Lorrimer took over.

Probably those first three seasons stand up better today than the fourth, although viewers may be given to wondering why so many Federation installations look like oil refineries. This, however, was one of the great aspects of the series. It did not follow the usual idea that in the future everything will be different, and that all we know today will have vanished. The use of existing structures in **Blake's Seven** was a part of the future world that it was portraying. Today, however, I fear it might look rather like doing it on the cheap.

The final aspect of the series that I wish to consider are the scripts themselves. The whole of the first season of thirteen episodes was written by Terry Nation himself, something unlikely in a series of its kind today. This was no bad thing as it happened, since it created a unity and soundness in the programme which certainly contributed to it being granted a second, third and fourth season. It also created a uniformity and certainty of characterisation that some programmes lack. **Blake's Seven** has hardly a single substandard episode in its first season, which is a boast not many series can make. A series which starts strongly will command a strong following.

All things considered, **Blake's Seven** is still a fine series. The years and advancements in television have looked kindly upon it. There is little about it that has dated beyond acceptance, and if the four main networks are looking to counter the onslaught of satellite television by re-showing their classic series (as seems to be the case), it would be absurd of the BBC to overlook this programme...

PETER LINFORD

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point in watching our screens this autumn? Maybe the 'axe' **would** be the most merciful thing to do. JNT said there was nothing to hang Season 26 on, such as Daleks or Cybermen...well, how about 'Season 26 - The Farewell Season'?

DreamWatch Bulletin is both a better read and a better name for your addictive magazine. Keep up the good work, your changing style reflects the times we live in. It gives the reader a rather more sophisticated outlook than some magazines one could mention. Congratulations to all involved.

Bill Edmunds, New York, USA (30-3-89)
I implore people not to condemn **Curse of Fenric** just because Nick Mallett is directing. Remember Ron Jones ? He started out with some rather sad efforts and then came back to direct sone ripping stories: **Frontios, Vengeance on Varos** and **Mindwarp**. People **can** learn from their mistakes. Don't give a story a thumbs down before it's even been seen.

Chris Jones, Cleveland (15-4-89)
So JNT has finally achieved his ambition. After the sheer 'brilliance' of miscasts such as Ken Dodd, Bonnie Langford and Colin Baker, we have (as CT calls it in its usual sycophantic style) "The cast of the century". I am of course referring to the news of the "marvellous" Nicholas Parsons' imminent appearance in the programme.

Really, though, does anyone expect the general public to take the programme seriously anymore ? I thought all that sort of thing had stopped when Season 24 had been aired. Sadly, this news is not as much a surprise as it perhaps would have been eight years ago. After all, what else could happen when the producer is acting as a 'caretaker' in order to wrap up a programme which - in the eyes of the BBC - is obviously well past its sell by date ?

Congratulations on the much-improved style. Personally I prefer the wider coverage of SF and fantasy you now feature. Provided you retain the same amount of **'Who** coverage you'll keep this reader satisfied.

ANGHELIDES REPLIES

Peter Anghelides, Coventry (30-4-89)
What a pity Mark Ward found my review of **Silver Nemesis** "arrogant". His assertive dismissal reinforces what I wrote. I acknowledged the diversity of fan opinion at the outset, but lampooned the humourless whingeing of people like Mark.

I do not think it unreasonable to expect fan reviewers to demonstrate in their comments that they understand what they criticise. I didn't enjoy **The Happiness Patrol**, but I don't need to justify personal preference. But if fans claim, for example, that a professional "cannot direct", I think they have an obligation to explain why. Some don't, preferring instead an unthinking, unsubstantiated exaggeration. To my mind **DWB** harms the credibility of fandom by printing their knee jerk ramblings.

But given that he didn't expect the show to be the "worst **Doctor Who** story of all time" (worse than **The Gunfighters, Horns of Nimon, Time and the Rani**, or any future production), I am resigned to Mark being "even more surprised" by my "ineptly patronising" review. Next time I'll endeavour to be less inept in patronising such an extraordinary position.

HYPOCRITE OF THE YEAR AWARD...

John(DWAS-been)Connors, Liverpool (13-4-89)
As a former DWAS exec. member I never thought I'd be writing a letter of praise to **DWB**, but I am. Regardless of my doubts as to your editorial policy, I feel you should be congratulated on maintaining a regular schedule. By contrast the DWAS' newsletter CT is constantly late, full of old news and generally lacks the sparkle of a couple of years ago. It's a pity that Brian Robb and his team cannot display the same enthusiasm for their product as **DWB** mostly clearly does. It's a total rip-off for them to produce less than 12 full issues per year. No wonder DWAS membership is falling.

*ED: Who are you trying to kid, Mr.Connors ? Like most DWAS exec. members before you, you've **never** had a kind word for **DWB**. Couldn't the fact that you were recently stuck off the DWAS exec. in disgrace have something to do with your attempting to further soil their name through these pages ? Sorry, Mr.Connors, but please air your dirty laundry elsewhere!*

CONGRATULATIONS, DAVID!

Clive Williamson, Birmingham (2-5-89)
Congratulations to David Banks for his portrayal of the Doctor when he took over from Jon Pertwee in Birmingham on 29th April. On seeing the sign they had put outside the Alexandra Theatre I was dubious to say the least. "David Banks ? Oh my God!" I thought. However, having failed to obtain a refund or tout my ticket I was forced to attend, and I'm glad I did - David Banks was **superb!** Gone were horrific visions of Mr.Banks in velvet jacket, frilled shirt and ill-fitting wig. Here was another of the Doctor's personas, and a very well played one too!

Well done, David Banks!

PECULIAR, OR WHAT ?

Robert Bradley, NSW, Australia (10-4-89)
Despite your editorial policy of providing a "free and uncensored" letters page as a forum for **Doctor Who** fans to air their views, I note that from my previous letter (DWB#64) you have deleted my description of JNT as "peculiar". This description can be supported by the evidence of the many peculiar ideas with which he has perverted the concept of **Doctor Who**, and which the viewing public has rejected to the extent that this once-great series is, at best, a year-to-year proposition now; and at worst, a laughing stock both inside and outside the BBC.

By the way, did you know that while in Sydney a few years back, JNT told some local fans that he couldn't accept the original series' idea that the Doctor has a grand-daughter...because it implied **sex**!

Now, is that peculiar, or what ?

*ED: These pages **are** a free platform, but **not** for hurling gratuitous insults around, which I'm afraid is how your original letter read, Robert.*

WHO IS MALCOLM KHOLL ?

Paul Dumont, Oxford (27-4-89)
Thanks for #65. The Season 25 Retrospective was absorbing but best of all was the coverage of the play, particularly Iain Keiller's review! A great issue - DWM haven't overtaken you yet!

I don't see why Rona Munro's name should be an alias seeing as she wrote the (admittedly not very good) Play On One, Biting The Hands. I seem to recall the same being suggested about Ben Aaronovitch. I would like to know, though, who Malcolm Kholl is, and **why** he wrote **Delta and the Bannermen...**

Ged Sweeney
Until I read **Delta and the Bannermen** I thought it was an enjoyable romp of a story. However, to those who object to **Who** novelisations being in the children's section of bookshops, I would say read **Delta and the Bannermen** and you'll soon understand why.

WILLIAMS DESERVES EXPOSURE

L.Hampton, Cheltenham (5-5-89)
Why isn't there a campaign to get some of **Doctor Who**'s richest era onto tape ? I'm talking about the Graham Williams years and such gems as **City of Death, Destiny of the Daleks, Image of the Fendahl, Invasion of Time...**and my personal favourite **The Sunmakers.** They all have in common a strong story base. Yes, some of the acting is dodgy, the sets/costumes sometimes poor, but this doesn't detract.

The ratings for the period show the era was popular with the public. To watch Graham Williams' **'Who** asks you of nothing but to submerge yourself into the story and characters before you - and the stories made **sense!**

JNT would be wise to note that because the stories/plots made sense, Williams could get away with murder, albeit under different circumstances. To be charged with a lack of imagination and plot is wholly more deplorable than to be moaned at because the Daleks were falling apart. The era deserves exposure...

Alan Beadnell, Gloucestershire
My favourite story is **Androids of Tara**, era is Tom Baker, and I am a Robert Holmes fan. This may seem a strange combination, but I don't analyse anything I see, merely ask myself "Have I been entertained ?" Depending on the answer I just each individual story. I see this as important in understanding how the general public see **Doctor Who.** The casual viewer will never become permanent if he/she is expected to follow the swiss-cheese plots of **Time and the Rani, Timelash, Twin Dilemma, Paradise Towers...**without the indisputable **charisma** of Tom Baker or the like to carry it off.

Myself and all of my non-fandom friends (consciously or otherwise) feel **Doctor Who** ended after **Castrovalva** part four (excluding **Frontios** and **Caves of Androzani**) in the true sense of Sydney Newman's concept. It insults me to hear of a Graham Williams revival as being "trendy", because his era stood as one of the most entertaining periods of the show, and I await the arrival of **Androids of Tara** on video - then the debate will begin in earnest...

David Hookham, Leics (13-3-89)
The review of Myth Makers 16 (DWB#64) gives me the impression that Richard Franklin, more than any other interviewee, has an extremely limited choice of anecdotes, since those mentioned in the review are almost identical to those given in issue one of Fan Mail! And **I don't** agree with the interviewer appearing in the title sequence - he is a medium, **not** a star himself!

TERRANCE DICKS

THE SECOND AND CONCLUDING PART OF THE INTERVIEW WHICH TOOK PLACE AT HIS HAMPSTEAD HOME ON FRIDAY, MARCH 31st, BY GARY LEIGH AND SHELDON COLLINS

GL: Can you tell us about your involvement with the 'Sentinel' project ?
Yes, it sort of came from Barry Letts' involvement. It's actually really very minimal in the sense that Chris Leach, the producer, worked it all out. He then got in touch with Barry who went to see him and said "Really there's not much I can do for you because you've decided most of what you want to do". Then they got in touch with me through Barry and I went down to Brighton to see them and it's really not much more than that. I've had no input whatsoever. They've asked if - if it gets off the ground - would I be interested in writing some or perhaps script editing it, and I've said if it gets off the ground then I will.

You see, it's like the film. They've worked tremendously hard. their promotional video is very good and they've turned out a very impressive brochure, and you could make the premise work. It's very general and it's not so much ideas as execution. You could do a brilliant science fiction series from this premise and you could do a lousy one. The premise actually isn't as important as how well it's done. It's like **Star Trek;** a world-saving organisation linked to a mysterious crystal that lies underneath Stone Henge and that in turn is linked to a lot of other crystals that run the Universe. It's set in the immediate future and Jon Pertwee would play Jason Havlin, the leader of this organisation.

GL: Is Barry Letts still with the project ?
Barry was never particularly with the project any more than I was. What a producer does is get the whole thing together and set it up and Chris Leach had already done that so Barry wasn't needed in that capacity. And what I said was, "Until you actually get finance and get off the ground and I can commission scripts and things, there's nothing I can do either", so really we're not involved in any other than a kind of general well-wishing capacity. If they get off the ground Barry might write or direct one and I might write one or script edit. I would certainly help them if I had the time. They're very keen and nice young lads and they've worked enormously hard on it. But one doesn't in the least want to be discouraging but it's such long odds to get the money through. I mean I personally would not spend a large portion of my life trying to get a science fiction series off the ground.

"DOCTOR WHO's NEVER BEEN REGARDED AS A PRESTIGE SHOW"

The way television is going, it is getting less and less likely that that kind of thing will get off the ground, it really is. More game shows and soaps is what we're going to get on television in the future. It's going to get like America. I mean, **Doctor Who's** hanging on by the skin of it's teeth and fewer and fewer shows of that kind are now going to get off the ground. I don't think **Doctor Who** has ever really been regarded as a prestigious show at the BBC. Barry will be the first person to tell you that when he got in as producer they had already offered the post to four other people who all said "You must be joking!" Barry just liked the idea of doing it, but it is not a job that people would fight to get within the BBC.

GL: That's certainly the case nowadays because only a year ago the BBC were looking for a new producer to apparently no avail. Your name was a popular choice among 'Doctor Who' fans, but were you actually approached ?
No. There was a huge amount of speculation about that and I never knew anything about it. Nobody ever made me an approach or anything and what I always said was if I were ever asked I would obviously think about it because I love the show. But equally well it is not something I desperately want to do. I would have needed to have been persuaded, really, and I'm not sure I would have been. It's something which I'm very fond of and I like to come back and do the occasional thing, but to go back to giving the whole of my life to **Doctor Who** again - and it really would be an enormously demanding job - I'm not really sure that I would want to do that now.

SC: What's the situation regarding the Sunday Classics series, which you produced until recently ?
They're not doing them anymore. It's as simple as that.

SC: Did you go straight into the Classics from 'Doctor Who' ?
No. I went back to being freelance for about five or six years after **Doctor Who** when I wrote most of the early novels, and then Barry eventually moved to being producer of the Classics series which he did for about the five years I was away and then he asked me to come back and script edit that. I sort of go in cycles; I like working for the BBC for about five years but I also like being freelance for about five years. I really enjoy very much now my freelance work; not having to go into an office and worry about finance and budgets and that kind of thing, or being much concerned with anything but writing. But maybe in a year or two I'll be fed up with it.

"OUR TELEVISION IS GOING THE WAY OF AMERICA"

GL: Do you think the BBC's cancelling of the Classics series after so many years is another indication of quality television going down the drain to pave the way for competition against new channels and satellite TV ?
Yes. The whole of television is going the way of America. The Classics was a popular and prestigious series and they were getting good ratings, but the BBC didn't have the money to do it anymore. It's like musical chairs and that particular chair gets taken away. Costume drama, like science fiction, is enormously expensive by definition because everything you see has to be mostly made. All the principle parts, for example, have their clothes specially made to fit, although extras' do come out of stock and wardrobe, but you're still talking about millions of pounds for something like Vanity Fair which is one of the last ones I did.

GL: You're obviously very disappointed then ?
I'm not really because I take things very much as they come. As it happened, as soon as I left the BBC I got totally wrapped up in the **Doctor Who** play and I'm really enjoying it, so I'm not disappointed.

GL: Weren't you offered another in-house job by the BBC ?
No, because there aren't the jobs about at the BBC. The kind of thing I've been doing (ie: routine programming) is not being done anymore. When Barry was doing the Classics he was doing three serials a year for about ten years, regular as clockwork. When I took over I did three shows my first year, two shows my second year, one long one in my third year and one short one in my fourth year. The whole thing was dwindling away and it was all to do with money.

GL: What was Michael Grade's attitude towards the Classics serials when he arrived at the BBC ?
Grade came in just as I took over as producer with Oliver Twist, which was my first production and an enormous success. They were thinking then about taking the Classics serial off, but then people have always been talking of taking it off - all through Barry's time people were walking about with an axe. Anyway, Oliver Twist got audiences of 10-12 million and Jonathan Powell told me that Michael Grade was totally amazed by its success and I think that brought us a reprieve for a year or two. Mostly in my time we did do very good successful shows like The Diary of Anne Frank.

GL: This is a far cry from the BBC of old who used to encourage quality television instead of pandering to the ratings.
As I said, television over here is going to get like America: 25 channels and crap on all of them. I mean, if you flick the television dial in America that's all you get.

GL: That's already evident on British TV, particularly LWT on a Saturday night which I think has become an abomination.
Yes, that's right, cheap shows with high audiences which is the opposite, you see, to the Classics series which are generally very expensive shows with moderate audiences. You're not really going to pack them in with Dickens in the way you are with Neighbours. That's not the way things are.

GL: It's akin to The Sun being the most popular newspaper.
That's right. What you're going to get is tabloid television in the way you get tabloid journalism, but in the newspaper world the quality press can survive because the expenses aren't so high.

It's also partly to do with the decline of the influence of the BBC, because if you're going to have quality television I think you've got to be really undemocratic and say "We're going to do certain things because we think they **ought** to be done". Like the BBC saying "Right, we're going to do all the plays of Shakespeare in chronological order and you ought to watch them because it's educational and they'll be very good for you". Now that is terrible arrogance in a sense because who on Earth wants to watch Shakespeare on TV ? But if we don't do it nobody will, and now we're stopping doing it and you're also going to lose the (what I call) "as-good-as" factor with ITV who would occasionally have come up with a very good show. For example, when ITV did Brideshead Revisited or The Jewel In The Crown, why they did it was to show they're as good as the BBC, because there are people at ITV who want to do quality stuff. With them it was like once in a blue moon, but they **could** do it and they'd pat themselves like mad on the back, whereas we'd routinely do about three a year.

"ADAMS DOESN'T NEED THE KIND OF MONEY W.H.ALLEN PAY"

GL: Moving onto your bookwriting, you haven't done many 'Who books in recent years because a lot of the original authors have been approached.
I have actually now written more non-**Doctor Who** books than **Doctor Who** books! I have got over 100 children's books in print, over half of which are mostly books for younger children, which is where the market is - the 8-12 and 12-15 age group - and that's really where the bulk of my work is now as a bookwriter because the **Doctor Who** thing has been steadlily shrinking. I work for four or five different publishers all under my own name.

GL: You're currently working on two new 'Doctor Who' commissions which look like they could well be your last.
Yes, I'm working on **Planet of Giants** now and **The Space Pirates** next and I wouldn't be at all surprised if they're my last.

GL: How do you approach writing a novel like 'The Space Pirates' where only one episode exists for review purposes ?
I've got hold of **Planet of Giants** and the odd episode from **The Space Pirates** and the scripts from JNT's office. You just have to make do with what you can get. For a long time in the early days when I first started doing them videos weren't around and you simply had to use the scripts and your imagination, so I'm quite used to doing that. With some of the older ones which just consist of the odd episode you just make do with what you've got. Sometimes you get some visual reference from the BBC library like old stills where you can see who the actors were and what the costumes and sets looked like.

GL: Apart from these two and forthcoming seasons, which now appear to be the exclusive territory of the original writers, there's only the two Troughton Dalek tales and the Doug Adams scripts awaiting commission.
John Peel's in a good position to negotiate the remaining Dalek ones, but Douglas Adams is now so rich he doesn't need the kind of money W.H.Allen are willing to pay him.

GL: Do you know if W.H.Allen have any plans beyond the televised 'Who stories ?
The obvious possibility is original stories. The original **Star Trek,** as I'm sure you know, only ever ran for three seasons and they ran out of source material very quickly, but because the show and the books were so popular there was an immense volume of **Star Trek** books which were all originals.

GL: Do you think a similar series of original 'Doctor Who' books would depend on them being penned by established writers as opposed to new people or even fan writers ?
It would depend on the quality of the books.

GL: I surveyed readers on their ideas for the book range in our recent Readers Poll and the most popular suggestion was for novelising unused scripts that never made it to the screen.
That okay. It would give you a hook. However scripts that I worked on during my time that fell through did so for excellent reasons and you might not necessarily want to revive them. And that's only a limited thing you might get a few books out of, like **Shada.**

GL: Your first season as script editor - Season Six - had more than its fair share of aborted scripts.
There were a couple that fell through but I can't remember what they were or whether they still exist anywhere. As I say, **Star Trek** ran out very early on and constantly every year there are new **Star Trek** novels coming out. A lot of them are written by fans who have kind of graduated to being professional writers, but the fans seem to like them. Some are written by established science fiction writers who have written novels for the format and I see no reason why you couldn't do as many originals as there are exisiting **Doctor Who** scripts.

GL: A lot of fans I'm sure would be adverse to the idea of unfamiliar writers penning original novels.
You can take any good science fiction writer who knows the premise and understands the show. A lot of the original authors are dead now. People like Robert Holmes could have done one.

GL: What is your earliest recollection of your involvement with 'Doctor Who'?
It was around 1968 when I was offered the job of script editor to take over from Derrick Sherwin. It was out of the blue. Derrick and I had worked on Crossroads together for which I wrote lots of scripts and was storyliner for for six months.

"TOM NEEDED A STRONG PRODUCER TO CONTROL HIM"

GL: Did you shed a tear at Crossroads' passing last year ?
No, not really. It was almost the first proper job in television, before which I was in advertising. At the start you'll do anything and I actually got on very well with it. A funny thing is my career started in advertising, then I did soap opera and moved up to **Doctor Who** and finally went into the Classics serials. All that time the TV industry has been moving steadily in the opposite direction: down from quality TV to poular TV, to soap opera, to advertising! I would actually have been better off if I'd stayed in advertising all along!!

My first recollection of **Doctor Who** is going to playbacks of **The Web of Fear,** which I had nothing to do with but I remember turning up for that and seeing what was going on.

GL: Your first season as script editor was fraught with problems.
It was in a terrible state and didn't really start getting sorted out until Barry Took over. We were always desperately struggling to get the show out.

GL: Do you know how close you were to cancellation at that time ?
Well, when I joined in the last of the Troughton days they were talking about taking the show off and I was very soon told after I'd joined that this was going to be the last season. And I thought terrific, this is like getting a job on the Titanic! Certainly they were looking for a replacement after Patrick Troughton's period, and the only reason they went ahead with Jon Pertwee was they couldn't come up with anything that was better. Sherwin and Bryant came up with various ideas but nobody liked them and they eventually went off and did other things and the BBC thought "Oh well, the slot's open, we might as well do another season of **Doctor Who".** And then everything kind of clicked together: Jon took over; Barry took over as producer; colour came in and that first season was a smash, and it was a smash for something like the next 12 years, I think.

SC: Why do you say the next '12' years ? Presumably you mean up to 1982 when Peter Davison joined ?
Very roughly I think all our time was fine, and the first period of Tom's - when Bob Holmes took over as script editor - they were not only as successful as we'd been, they were more so. They took a success and actually pushed it up a bit more.

GL: The ratings held up during the Graham Williams period too, but what did you think about the tomfoolery element that was creeping in ?
It wasn't so bad at the beginning. The trouble was that Tom needed a strong producer to control him and he didn't get him, but I think the first five years of Tom's reign as the Doctor are excellent. Jon will always be my favourite, but five years of Jon and five years of Tom and everything was fine. It started to go off I think when Tom was allowed to get out of control and walk through it, but Tom got bored you see.

GL: JNT managed to pull him back into shape for his last season but strangely the ratings then plummeted to an all-time low average.
That's right. It faltered and never really recovered around the end of Tom's time.

GL: What are you working on at the moment ?
After finishing the two **Doctor Who** novelisations I will possibly be tackling the novelisation of the play. The new editor is certainly interested in that, though he has some worries about whether it will actually be possible to turn it into a novel. I've said of course it can - obviously I will have to fill in a lot of the background but it would work perfectly well.

GL: How long do they give you to write the books ?
It depends on what their schedule is. I get more time these days compared to the early days. When it started there were four or five of us doing it because I was still working on **Doctor Who,** but gradually people dropped out and there was a long period when it

was nearly always me. And then gradually more and more people started coming in again and I started doing more and more other things. I will quite happily do a **Doctor Who** book or two a year as long as they're around to do. If they're not it won't break my heart, but I like the programme and I like to keep involved with it but it's not central to me now.

GL: What is your personal favourite novel ?

It's hard to say, really. I like **The Five Doctors** because that's a novelisation of my own story and there was a lot of fun in that with all the different Doctors. Otherwise probably one of Bob's like Weng Chiang. Bob was always my favourite writer.

SC: Are the books still selling as well as they used to ?

W.H.Allen have never paid much in advance, and the rest of what you get depends on how well the book sells. I don't think I get more than anyone else.

GL: Is there a book that has always sold particularly well ?

No. I would always say, by and large, that any **Doctor Who** book sells as well as any other because people who buy them buy the range generally. **The Five Doctors** did particularly well because that came out close to the time of the show and it was a special event. Otherwise I would say that anything with the Daleks in probably performs slightly better. But the great thing about the **Doctor Who** range, when it was in its prime, was that they were **all** bestsellers. They would print whatever they printed of copies and they would sell them out immediately and they would quickly print a second edition. And they did, for a long time, have an absolute automatic guaranteed bestseller. A writer gets an advance against royalties and you don't get paid any more until the books have earned more than what they've already paid you. For example, if they pay you £500, when the book's earned £500 and if it earns on top of that you get some more.

SC: Have you any aspirations to tackle a large-format Haining-style 'Who book ?

No, it's too much like hard work! I did one of those with Mac Hulke. He was always the inspiration behind those because he loved gathering information and facts and interviewing people. It really is a slog doing that if you're going to do it well and I really don't want to be involved in that. With Mac I did The Making Of **Doctor Who** and an updated version and that was it. And then people like Jean-Marc L'Officier came and he's doing an updated Programme Guide now. He enjoys researching all that stuff whereas I hate being tied down to real facts. I much prefer if I can make it all up.

GL: Have you any unfulfilled ambitions ?

I've never had any ambitions anyway really. I've always done what's turned up next, you see, and things have always turned up. For example as soon as I left the BBC the **Doctor Who** play turned up and I've been busier than ever. And I guess something else will turn up after that too!

TERRANCE DICKS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH

THERE ARE TWO American SF series from the 70's running at the moment - both of which are repeats - but which are worth looking at nonetheless.

One is meant to be a comedy, the other a drama, but at times it can be hard to tell which is which. The series are **Mork and Mindy** and **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century.**

Mork was Robin Williams' first starring rôle, allowing him to use his talents as a stand-up performance comedian to great effect. It's the usual fish-out-of-water story - Mork is an alien sent to Earth in an egg to report on the human race. He shacks up (well, this is an American series made during the 70's - just look at the fashions!) with Mindy (a terribly trendy Pam Dawber). The relationship between the two is the source of much of the comedy, including Mork's relationships with other women. The first series concentrated on Mindy and her immediate family, but future episodes widened the scope of the show to take in the whole neighbourhood, including the local café, where Mork eventually gets a job. The series satirises much of American life in a gentle way, allowing people to laugh at the humour even if they don't get the point of much of it.

At the end of each episode Mork reports to Orson (no, not Welles!), his intergalactic watchman, about what he has learnt about human life in that particular episode. Thankfully this usual preaching slot to be found across much of American television ('the moral of the story is...') is also used by Williams as a source of great jokes and humour.

A CUT-PRICE INTERGALACTIC JAMES BOND

The DEF II slot once occupied by **Mission Impossible** (the same slot where we may see the new Australian series) is currently filled with repeats of **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century,** once broadcast successfully by ITV against Tom Baker's last **Doctor Who** series.

This updating of the Buster Crabbe Saturday serials is worse than its predecessor on every front - special effects, acting, plot, **everything**! Gil Gerard turns in the worst performance this side of Jack Lord in Hawaii Five-O! Buck is represented as a smooth womaniser, like a cut-price intergalactic James Bond. His tubby tin sidekick, Tweeki, has more charisma. The robot is saved by its voice, performed by Mel Blanc, the man behind the voices in the classic Warner Brothers Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck cartoons.

The world of Buck Rogers is post **Star Wars** late 70's TV SF, the same inhabited by **Battlestar Galactica.** There are lots of stock shots of space craft repeated over and over again to break up the vague attempts at coherent dialogue. The plots are ludicrous, if not incomprehensible, but it seems to have some sort of bizarre fatal attraction for TV SF junkies. We should be thankful the series only lasted one season and there are so few episodes, otherwise we could be subjected to much more.

Bring on **Star Trek** again, quick!

SUSAN POLAN

WITH MEMBERSHIP CONFIDENCE IN THE D.W.A.S. AT AN ALL-TIME LOW AND THE DISCLOSURE THAT THERE WILL BE NO MAJOR TWO-DAY PANOPTICON THIS YEAR (ARGUABLY THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL SAVING GRACE IN RECENT YEARS), NEIL EVERY STATES HIS CASE FOR A NEW INTERNATIONAL 'DOCTOR WHO' APPRECIATION SOCIETY...

I.D.W.A.S. – Its objective

SINCE THE MID-70's, 'Doctor Who' fandom has grown world-wide and there are now thousands of fans in more than 60 countries around the globe.

These fans are members of separate, and quite often (unfortunately) opposing groups. In the past there has been much discontent throughout fandom concerning differences in opinions and other petty matters. We believe that the people who enjoy causing this trouble and spreading childish rumours etc. are in the minority and it is the majority of fandom who we think may be interested in this venture.

In our opinion world fandom is lacking a basic unity - Australians are in their corner of the world and the Americans are in their's. This really is rather foolish because we all have a common interest - the appreciation of **Doctor Who.** We aim to bring fandom together in the form of **The International Doctor Who Appreciation Society,** or **The I.D.W.A.S..** In order for this venture to succeed, we are relying on you, the fans, to:

a) Support us with as much enthusiasm as you can muster, and,
b) Spread the word of our venture to as many other fans as you possibly can.

If we obtain enough support then we hope to begin a subscription service (which will be value for money). We also hope to produce membership cards and a Society newsletter. This newsletter will be the main form of communication in the Society and would feature news articles on all fan events around the world, rather than just news in our own respective areas. This way fans will be aware of everything that is going on around the world of fandom.

In order to accomplish this newsletter successfully we require a representative(s) from all countries where there is organised fandom. The person(s) need to have a good knowledge of fan activity in their area and must be prepared to communicate regularly with the organisers. We also hope to set up a correspondence scheme between fans across the globe, this time, though, on a much larger scale than has been dealt with by fanzines in the past. Generally, we want to increase communication amongst the world's fans because at present there is very little correspondence.

We believe that there is a desperate need for an international **Doctor Who** organisation in order to extinguish the nasty feelings amongst some fans and introduce more friendship. If **Doctor Who** was ever threatened again with permanent cancellation, we need to have a united organisation to co-ordinate a rescue. Keeping ourselves to ourselves in our separate groups just alienates fans and ferments more discontent. Can you imagine a situation where squabbling fans of **Doctor Who** contribute to the programme's downfall ?

The creation of the I.D.W.A.S. is going to take an enormous amount of work and time being on such a large scale. We have started the ball rolling and now it's up to you to give us the support we require. Without you this will never work so it's up to **you** to make the next move. If you are interested in aiding us in this venture or if you have any ideas which may be of assistance then we would like to hear from you. All correspondence should be sent with an SAE to: I.D.W.A.S., "Chartru", Mont Felard, St.Lawrence, Jersey, Channel Islands.

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*** *** *** ***

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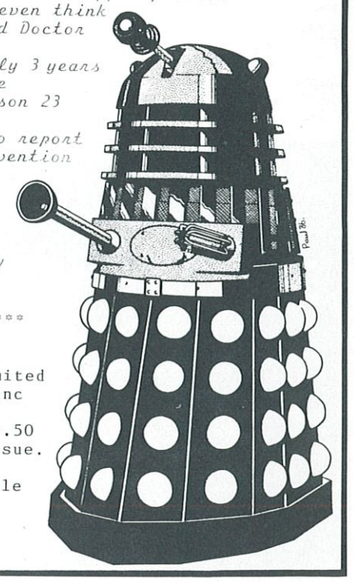


DOCTOR WHO VIDEO SURVEY

PRINTED BELOW are the results of the video poll held as part of DWB's 'Doctor Who' 25th Anniversary Series Survey in issue 62 to determine the stories you would like to see yet to be released on commercial tape.

Shortly after the survey was held came news of the imminent issuing in Britain of **The Time Warrior** and **The Ark in Space** following their première in Australia so although both stories received votes they are discounted from the survey. However, since news of **The Daleks** was only recently made known we have listed it, albeit unplaced, to show what a shrewd and popular move BBC Video have made, though whether their decision to release the adventure over two tapes proves successful or now waits to be seen...

Perhaps unsurprisingly the overall winner is **The Daemons,** a story that doesn't officially exist in the archives in complete colour. Would the BBC be prepared to put out a popular story comprised of colour with one episode (four) in black and white ? An interview we hope to conduct with the decision-makers at BBC Video should answer this dilemma. Ideally, then, **The Sea Devils** - another Michael Briant-directed masterpiece to add to the collection - would make the best follow-up to the June releases.

The next most popular choice, in fourth place - **The Deadly Assassin** - is already a strong contender, recently released in America, illustrating again that BBC Video clearly have their fingers firmly on the pulse of what's popular. Apart from this, the only other 'popular' Hinchcliffe stories awaiting selection are **Seeds of Doom** and **Genesis of the Daleks** both in the top ten and six episodes apiece, and the colourful period tale - **The Masque of Mandragora** - in 21st place. Hopefully if **Genesis** is released BBC Video will have learned their lesson and issue it completely unedited rather than the butcher's job performed on it for its two televised repeats. After that, if the BBC still want to tap the Tom Baker era, there are still the more popular and well-produced Graham Williams stories to choose from like **Horror of Fang Rock, Image of the Fendahl** and **The Sunmakers,** and of course **City of Death,** in my opinion the perfect story for video with its rich locations, sharp dialogue and sheer all-round entertainment value. Even more recent Nathan-Turner produced tales like **Logopolis, Warriors' Gate, The Leisure Hive,** and Peter Davison's **Castrovalva** and especially **Caves of Androzani** - the story voted all-time classic in our last series survey - and **Earthshock** shouldn't be overlooked despite the widespread advent of the video recorder during the 80's. Nor should more black and white archive material like **Unearthly Child, The Aztecs, Dalek Invasion of Earth, The Mind Robber** or **The War Games,** all popular choices for video release.

If anything, these results clearly show that fans - the experts when it comes to judging **Doctor Who** on quality - are willing to see a **diverse** mix of releases from all eras of the show, not just the universally popular Jon Pertwee/early Tom Baker years.

Of interest, the 52 stories listed were each nominated by at least two or more of the 350 readers who took part which, in addition to the stories already available, leaves over 50 stories which received insufficient or no votes at all. Perhaps the most surprising choice was the unfinished **Shada** (23rd) which would require some careful editing and narration to make such a venture work...

		P	V	F	D	S	Y
1st	THE DAEMONS	215	98	43	JP	8	'71
	The Daleks	172	82	32	WH	1	'63
2nd	The Sea Devils	167	80	31	JP	9	'72
3rd	The Deadly Assassin	159	71	34	TB	14	'76
4th	The Seeds of Doom	143	68	23	TB	13	'76
5th	The Caves of Androzani	103	52	20	PD	21	'84
6th	Genesis of the Daleks	99	46	17	TB	12	'75
7th	Earthshock	74	38	11	PD	19	'82
8th	City of Death	69	34	11	TB	17	'79
9th	The Mind Robber	61	31	8	PT	6	'68
10th	Inferno	60	29	9	JP	7	'70

11th	Terror of the Autons('71) 49	14th	The Green Death ('73) 39
12th	The Web Planet('65) 43	15th	The Three Doctors('73) 38
13th	Dalek Invasion'Earth('64) 41	16th	An Unearthly Child('63) 33

17th	Planet of the Spiders('74)	31	27th	Castrovalva('82)	14	37th	Planet of Evil('75)	8	45th	Stones of Blood('78)	4
18th	The Aztecs('64)	29	28th	The Time Meddler('65)	13	38th	The War Machines('66)	8	46th	The Pirate Planet('78)	4
19th	The War Games	28	29th	Warriors' Gate('81)	12	39th	Resurrection'Daleks('84)	8	=	The Visitation('82)	4
20th	Logopolis('81)	26	30th	Keys of Marinus('64)	10	40th	Ambassadors of Death('70)	7	48th	The Dominators('68)	3
21st	Masque'Mandragora('76)	24	=	Revelation'Daleks('85)	10	41st	The Gunfighters('66)	6	=	Destiny of the Daleks('79)	3
22nd	Horror of Fang Rock('77)	21	32nd	Frontier in Space('73)	10	42nd	Keeper of Traken('81)	6	=	Remembrance'Daleks('88)	3
23rd	Shada('80, incomplete)	18	=	The Leisure Hive('80)	10	43rd	Robot('74)	5	51st	The Android Invasion('75)	3
24th	The Chase('65)	18	34th	Claws of Axos('71)	10	44th	Hand of Fear('76)	4	=	The Invasion of Time('78)	3
25th	Image of the Fendahl('77)	16	35th	Planet of the Daleks('73)	9						
26th	The Silurians('70)	16	36th	The Sunmakers('77)	9						

(P = Points, V = Votes, F = Firsts, D = Doctor, S = Season, Y = Year)

ROLL V.T. . . .

THERE IS A DEFINITE WAVE OF EXCITEMENT building up around the 'Doctor Who' video industry that is starting to become discernable not only to fans but also to commercial dealers and retailers. In short, business is booming, and the recent trend towards deregulating the production of new cassettes has set the market for VT Who's alight as never before.

It has taken over five years for the BBC on its own to release just twelve titles from its considerable archive of **Doctor Who** stories, and yet, by mid-1989, that total will have increased by a third as much again as no less than four new serials become available to ardent collectors.

Of those four, three - **The Daleks, The Time Warrior** and **The Ark in Space** - will be released simultaneously in England on June 5th amid a welter of promotional hype and point-of-sale displays, the greatest of which - not unpredictably - will be reserved for the windows and entrances of the Virgin Megastore in central London.

The fourth release - **The Deadly Assassin** - is already out, but is so far only available in America for $20 - the first time the USA has taken the lead in clearing and releasing a commercially available **Doctor Who** story on video.

A warning, though, to would-be completists. The American system of broadcasting operates on 525 lines to a picture (NTSC), rather than Britain and Australia's 625 line service (PAL). Put simply, that means a tape bought in America will not produce a picture on an English screen unless you are the owner of a multi-system VCR **and** a multi-system TV.

BBC Enterprises insists it has no firm plans at present to extend the copyright clearances on the US tape for Britain, but then again, they said that last year about the Australian first-run releases of **Terror of the Zygons** and **The Talons of Weng Chiang**...

Along the way the BBC has had to learn some often painful lessons about marketing its oldies but goldies. The very first **Doctor Who** video release - **Revenge of the Cybermen** (which came out to mark the good Doctor's 20th anniversary) - committed the howler of featuring Cybermen and logo on the sleeve jacket that were different costume and logo-wise to those in the actual story; an example of that old maxim about not judging a book by its cover. On the insistence of JNT, a new jacket was quickly designed, replacing the offending **Earthshock** heads with the narratively authentic Bowtell masks. Not surprisingly, the original, erroneously jacketed VTs are now commanding collector prices at cons and marts.

However, despite a daunting price tag around £20+, the tape sold well - of greatest interest to fans being the unedited nature of the storyline which was complete except for the editing out of intermediate episodes' opening and closing graphics.

Not so the case with release number two; a completely butchered rendition of **The Brain of Morbius** which managed to truncate four episodes down to just sixty minutes with the consequential loss of several key scenes and a substantial amount of plot development.

The resulting storm of complaints, not least from director Christopher Barry, successfully deterred BBC Enterprises from releasing any more "Reader's Digest"-length stories, but was not sufficient to prevent further - if less marked - surgery on **Pyramids of Mars**. This time the BBC claimed it had acted for reasons of censorship, snipping out any sequences likely to impede the granting of a 'U' certificate for release.

Strangely, the edits made were different to those chosen by the Australian censors when they cut their print for screening in the 6 o'clock on-air slot. As one fan pointed out, if you combined the BBC tape with the Australian transmitted version of **Pyramids of Mars**, you could almost get a complete story! Censorship, it seems, is totally arbitrary to the tastes of the individual censor.

For a long time, sales of these tapes were sluggish. The price was sufficiently daunting, but so too was the attitude of many video promotion magazines which tended to ignore television-sourced material in favour of the glossier world of movies. A marked sufferer from this inverted snobbery was **The Seeds of Death**, which flopped on its initial release through the unpardonable sin of being in black-and-white at a time when the public's hunger was still for diets of rich "Eastmancolor".

The big breakthrough was the establishment and consolidation of the "Sell-Through Market"; that happy meeting ground between consumers, copyright holders, sales researchers and distributors where everyone finally agreed on an optimum price for tapes sold directly for domestic playback, a price nominally set at £9.99, albeit with some variations. This is the price tag towards which almost all of the **Doctor Who** tapes, even six-parters like **Weng Chiang**, have graduated in recent years.

Since adopting the sell-through standard, frequency of **Doctor Who** video releases has accelerated, bolstered by good sales at home and abroad, and favourable feedback from the public. In the main, censorship is now less in evidence even though both **'Zygons** and **'Weng Chiang** suffered minor snips - despite their 'PG' rating.

The last bastion of protest was the pruning of the inter-episode title sequences and credits; most notably on **The Seeds of Death** where the entire 'special graphics' model scene of the Earth and Moon seen from space was lost.

That problem is being re-dressed as of this year. Forcibly made aware from criticisms of 1988's **Quatermass and the Pit** release that in the past episode reprises tended to re-shoot the previous week's cliffhanger - thereby leading to a loss of material when episodes are segued together for video release - BBC Enterprises has stated that every UK released **Doctor Who** tape in 1989 will be divided into the original episodes, thereby enabling the inclusion of all cliffhangers and reprises. This will be of particular benefit to **The Daleks** which re-shot several of its episode openings.

As an aside note, this does mean the guaranteed inclusion of episode two's opener, which is the only surviving material from the first recording of 'The Dead Planet'. As readers of a certain book about **Doctor Who**'s early years may have noted, episode one was re-mounted for technical reasons mid-way through the story's shooting. Hence the rather muzzy, telecine transferred episode two sequence of Barbara emerging from the lift to face an approaching sink plunger representing all that is left of the first version.

At nearly £20, the two-tape release of **The Daleks** represents something of a risk for BBC Enterprises as it takes the total outlay for the story to the heights that made **The Seeds of Death** a poor seller. Nevertheless the choice of this story is a welcome bowing to the wishes of fans who have consistently voted it their number one requested Hartnell story in fanzine polls.

Presumably the other two complete Hartnell Dalek stories (**Dalek Invasion of Earth** and **The Chase**) will follow if **The Daleks** does make a modest profit, but while expectations for returns are not great, the story must achieve a certain target figure within a specified period before more monchrome material is dredged out for inspection.

On the plus side, the market for monochrome TV material is now far better than ever it was during the time of **The Seeds of Death.** Returns from The Forsyte Saga and especially from the record-selling Watch With Mother tapes prove that the one-time snob factor about "old TV" has declined. Many video distribution bodies are beginning to recognise the potential of issuing groups of films and programmes as "collect the lot" library sets (ie: make the packaging look attractive as a series of collective works on a bookshelf and ensure a numbering - or some form of labelling - system on the spines). Commercially this has worked well for the Channel 5 video group with their ITC released material. Findings have shown punters would rather buy a tape they didn't particularly want than live with a hole in their set.

Doctor Who's biggest problem with its black and white and some of its Pertwee material is not possessing the original material in the first place to fill those marketable holes. The major gaps in the Hartnell/Troughton collections puts a big dent in the chances of a significant number of their stories being unfurled.

With Jon Pertwee, the problem is even more complex. Black and white only serials like **The Silurians** are unlikely to see the light of day, likewise those stories which exist in mixed formats (colour and monochrome) such as **Invasion of the Dinosaurs.** The top requested Pertwee serial, **The Daemons,** suffers a further quandry. A full colour print of the story does exist but only as a copy from a 525 NISC master. Bulk duplication from such a master would result in picture quality below the BBC standard.

But all is not lost. The BBC's policy of deregulating a lot of its services has opened the way for other video distributors in other countries to clear and release tapes of BBC material - specifically Hoyts/Polygram in Australia and CBS/Fox in the USA.

The Deadly Assassin actually came out at the turn of the year and was part of a set of three tapes released in the USA to commemorate **Doctor Who**'s silver jubilee - the other two being **The Five Doctors** and **Day of the Daleks.**

Doctor Who video releases in the States are co-ordinated by CBS/Fox under license from the BBC, and are issued under the Playhouse video label, which also retails many other British shows and series. As a license holder they are allowed to negotiate copyright fees and clearances with artists and production staff, but only notionally for their own country. In practice, however, once clearance acceptances have been granted, it is a relatively minor operation for other countries to extend copyright for overseas release in return for a simple exchange of fee payments. In other words, the paper work does not have to be done twice. BBC Enterprises has benefitted from this scheme twice now, firstly with **'Zygons** and **'Weng Chiang** and secondly with **Ark in Space** and **The Time Warrior.** So again, do not be too surprised if **The Deadly Assassin** is on British store shelves before year's end.

One backward step, though, would be adoption of the American system of packaging for commercial VTs. Unlike our own (and Australia's) policy of protecting tapes within a dustproof plastic case, with an insertable jacket of sleeve notes, USA manufacturers are turning more and more over to packing tapes only in lightweight **cardboard** pockets. From the manufacturer's point of view it does reduce the unit cost of a tape (thereby boosting the profit margin), but at the expense of the consumer's interest. Cardboard packed tapes are much more prone to damage from dust, humidity, temperature and physical crushing.

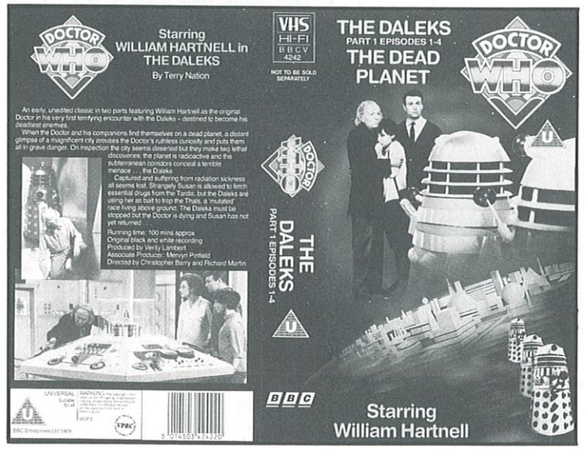
Queried on this point, the Head of Copyright Clearancing stated that BBC Enterprises had no plans at present to change their packaging, but would continue to monitor developments in the market, or to put it another way, it **could** happen here...

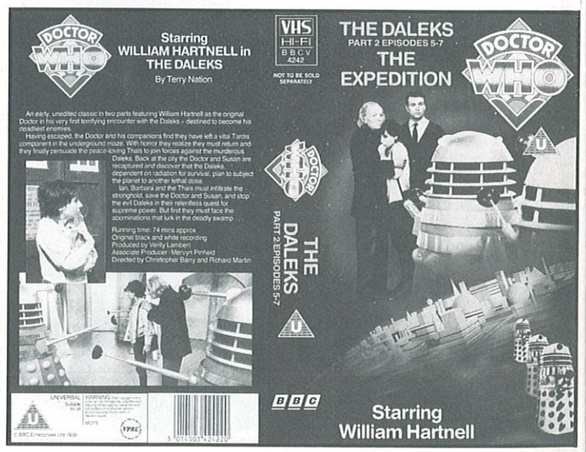
As to the future, recent agreements between Equity and programme license holders have removed the power of an individual artist, except in rare cases (eg: Martin Shaw on The Professionals and Roger Moore for The Saint, re:DWB#65) to hold up commercial sales of a broadcast by applying a veto - the problem which plagued SuperChannel throughout 1987/88 in its attempt to broadcast **Doctor Who.** And, on the technical side, any releases of recent stories (eg: **Greatest Show in the Galaxy)** will carry soundtracks in full stereo.

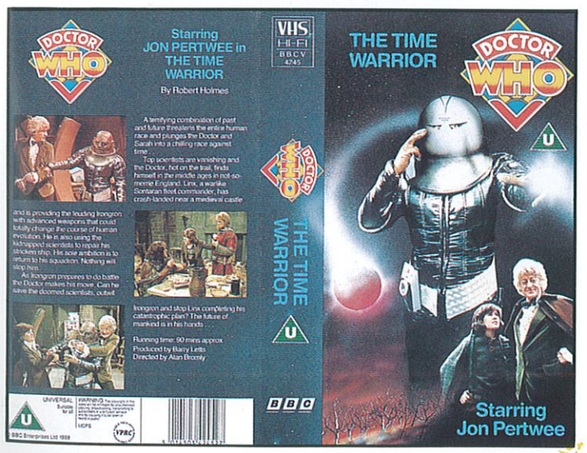
It seems, then, that the only hurdle still to cross, aside from increasing frequency of release, is the procedural fence allowing commercial releases to re-instate material cut from the TV transmission prints. This was a facility originally campaigned for by Douglas Adams in the early 80's when a two-volume set of **Hitch Hiker's Guide'** was mooted by Enterprises. High re-editing costs and the above old artists' copyright agreements were the reasons given then for over-ruling the suggestion, but the recent deregulation changes mean that the editing task could now be contracted out to cheaper facilities houses, and the potential artists' objections no longer apply.

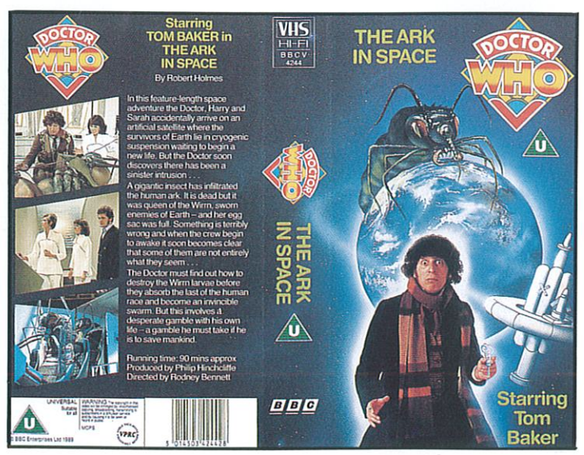
So, keeping in mind what is being done in the cinema this summer with the re-release of David Lean's fully restored epic Lawrence Of Arabia, there is nothing now but lack of initiative to prevent **Silver Nemesis** from finally making sense, and **Curse of Fenric** from comprising its fully scripted material.

JEREMY BENTHAM









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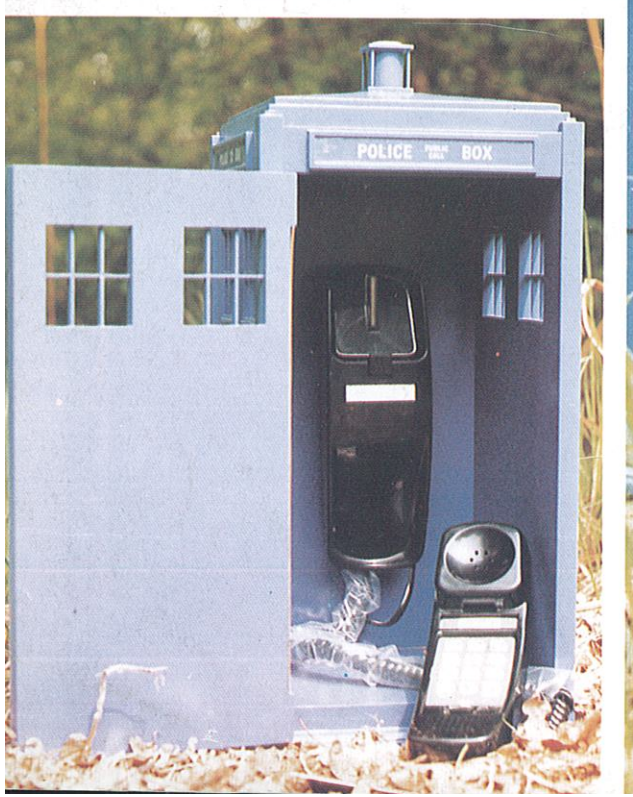

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